



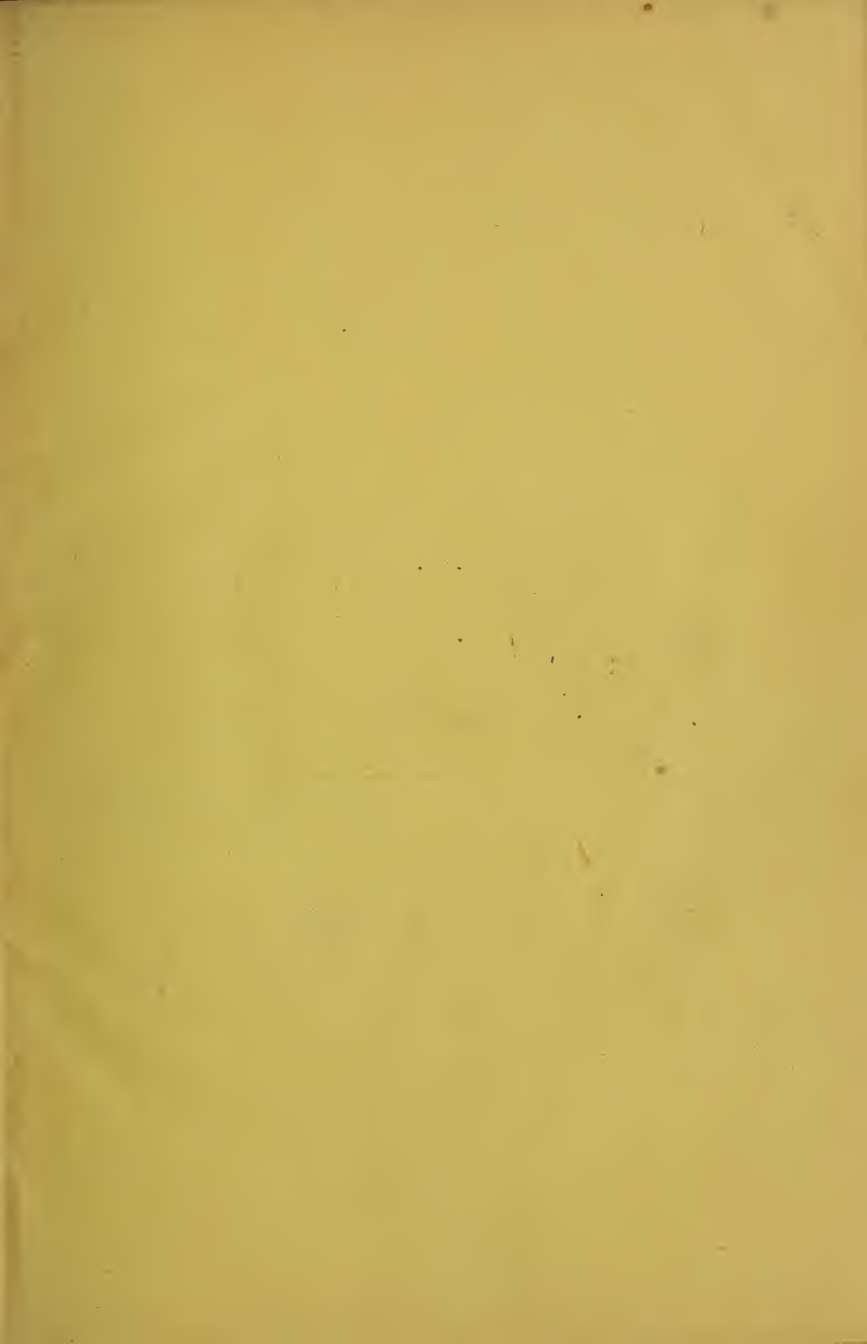
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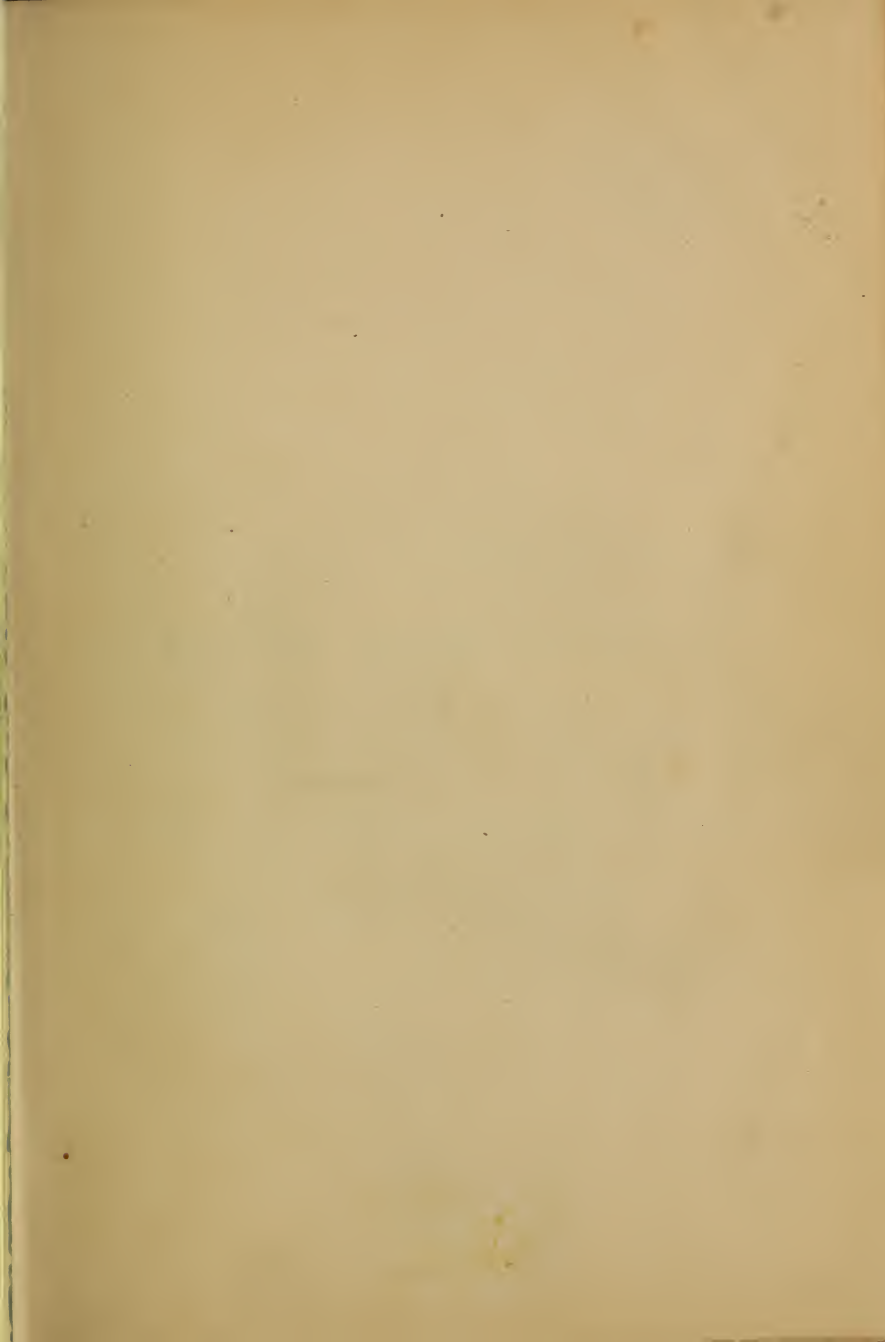
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BOYS AND BIRDS.









1. Baltimore Oriole.

2. Green Tody.

3. Purple Finch.

4. Blue Jay.

5. Vermilion Flycatcher.

6. Columbian Thornhill

7. Louisiana Tanager.

8. Lazuli Finch.

9. Red-winged Blackbird.

10. American Goldfinch.

11. White-winged Crossbill.

# BOYS AND BIRDS



MISS TRUAT'S MISSION



# BOYS AND BIRDS;

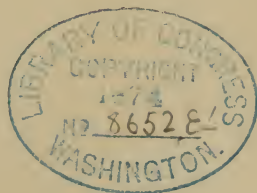
OR

## MISS TRUAT'S MISSION.

BY

SIDNEY DYER, A.M.,

AUTHOR OF "GREAT WONDERS," "HOME AND ABROAD,"  
"BLACK DIAMONDS," ETC.



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# CONTENTS.

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CHAPTER I.	
THE ARAB DISTRICT.....	PAGE 9
CHAPTER II.	
DOCTOR TRUAT AND HIS DAUGHTER.....	20
CHAPTER III.	
PREPARING FOR THE CONFLICT..... ..	31
CHAPTER IV.	
OPENING THE SCHOOL.....	42
CHAPTER V.	
THE GUARDIAN OF THE BIRDS' NESTS.....	59
CHAPTER VI.	
STORIES ABOUT EAGLES.....	71
CHAPTER VII.	
REPENTANCE AND PROMISES.....	89

## CHAPTER VIII.

	PAGE
VULTURES, HAWKS, AND OWLS.....	101

## CHAPTER IX.

MISS YOST LOOKING AFTER THE WITCHES.....	121
--	-----

## CHAPTER X.

WOODPECKERS AND CUCKOOS.....	134
------------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER XI.

VISIT TO MISS TRUAT AND HER PARROTS.....	154
--	-----

## CHAPTER XII.

SINGING BIRDS.—THRUSHES.....	177
------------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER XIII.

ROBINS, BOBOLINKS, BLACKBIRDS, ORIOLES, AND LARKS.....	201
---	-----

## CHAPTER XIV.

BLUE-BIRDS, CHICKADEES, WARBLERS, ETC.....	221
--	-----

## CHAPTER XV.

THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL.—NUTHATCHES AND SPAR- ROWS .....	241
---	-----

## CHAPTER XVI.

FINCHES, TANAGERS, CROSSBILLS, ETC.....	258
---	-----

## CHAPTER XVII.

SWALLOWS, MARTINS, WRENS, AND HUMMING- BIRDS.....	276
--	-----

# CONTENTS.

7

## CHAPTER XVIII.

	PAGE
CROWS, BIRDS OF PARADISE, JAYS, NIGHT-HAWKS, ETC.....	300

## CHAPTER XIX.

PIGEONS, DOVES, TURKEYS, PEACOCKS, ETC.....	319
---	-----

## CHAPTER XX.

DOMESTIC FOWLS, PARTRIDGES, AND OSTRICHES.....	339
--	-----

## CHAPTER XXI.

HERONS, STORKS, PLOVERS, STILTS, AND FLAMIN- GOES.....	353
---	-----

## CHAPTER XXII.

THE SECRET OUT.—SWANS, GEESE, DUCKS, GULLS, ETC.....	371
---	-----

## CHAPTER XXIII.

A RETROSPECT.....	402
-------------------	-----



# BOYS AND BIRDS.

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## CHAPTER I.

### *THE ARAB DISTRICT.*

SOME years ago a school division located on the banks of the Hudson River was known, from its turbulent character, as the "Arab District." The neighborhood was rocky and broken, and quite unfitted for any very profitable cultivation. Hence the greater part of the adult male population were engaged in navigating the noble river on which they lived. They were steamboat-men, barge-men, or employed in sailing the large fleet of sloops which once covered its waters, and still hold pertinacious rivalry in the busy scenes where they were once the admiration and pride. The fathers being thus called so constantly from home, the family government fell mostly into the hands of the mothers, whose administration is often quite too indulgent for the good of their offspring; but in

this community, unfortunately, the maternal sentiment had degenerated into a morbid and mistaken kindness. These mothers not only failed to restrain their children themselves, but carried their sympathy to such an excess that they would allow no others to put an effective check on the gratification of their whims or any restraint upon their vices. Hence, like true Arabs, they roamed at will about the neighborhood, much better acquainted with the orchards and watermelon patches than with the spelling-book or any useful industry. This very naturally brought about a condition of things analogous to the well-known relationship of the Arabs to the rest of mankind; their hands were against every man, and every man's hand was against them.

In the prosecution of the efficient school system of the Empire State this district had been early and properly organized, a suitable building provided, and other appliances secured to enable the school to make at least ordinary progress; but notwithstanding all these helps, the district had stood for years as a blot on the school records of the county. Indeed, its progress had been so rapid from bad to worse that for two or three years previous to the commencement of our story no teacher had been found capable of retaining his connection



with the school for a single entire term, and literally no progress had been made in advancing the knowledge of the pupils. Those who began with the alphabet were still ignorant of its mysteries, and the multiplication table to most of them was a profound unknown. But during the winter in which the reader is introduced to the district all the evils with which it had been afflicted had culminated, no less than three male teachers having been driven from the school. The first, who had opened the fall term, entered upon his duties by "laying down the law" and making a grand display of the means of enforcement. A heavy oaken ruler was placed conspicuously on his desk, and a full assortment of strong hickory rods adorned the huge shelf over his head. He had, indeed, been chosen by the school-committee more for his burly proportions and boasted physical ability to enforce discipline than for any intellectual or moral fitness for the position. When inducted into office, the committee especially enjoined upon him the necessity of governing the school as the great end of his commission, and gave him the strongest assurances of their moral support. The result showed that both he and the committee had miscalculated the forces with which they had to contend. On the first attempt to enforce his mandates by hickory

arguments, he was pounced upon by the whole Arab tribe, big and little; he was pommelled, scratched, bitten, and his hair pulled, until he was fain to beseech for mercy most lustily, coupled with a promise never to attempt to teach in that district again—a pledge he had no desire to disregard after his sore discomfiture.

The next pedagogue engaged, having a wholesome regard for the safety of his own person, avoided the mistake of his predecessor, and made no display of his authority or attempts to enforce discipline, but thought to succeed by moral suasion. The aim was commendable, but fruitless, like many similar attempts in the history of the world, from the fact that he was applying his force at the wrong point: the Arab district did not possess a moral sense sufficiently acute to be thus wrought upon. For several weeks he reasoned, coaxed, persuaded, and exhorted, but used no well-adapted measures to arouse the dormant sensibilities of his pupils and awaken their sleeping intellects, and then resigned his hopeless charge, and the young Arabs inscribed another victory on their banners.

After quite an interval a third teacher was engaged, a somewhat conceited, foppish young man, yet possessed of more than ordinary ability for the teachers of that early day. He showed some ability

to interest his pupils ; and as he joined with them in many of their sports, he really became more popular than any teacher had been for years, and the committee began to flatter themselves that success had crowned their efforts. Being a young man, it was very natural for him to become somewhat attentive to his older female pupils, to one of whom he seemed more than usually devoted, often being her attendant home after school was dismissed, thereby bringing upon her the envy and sharp remarks of some of her schoolmates less successful in attracting special attention.

On one unfortunate occasion his system of government led to a catastrophe equally as disastrous as those which overthrew his predecessors. His methods of punishment had been to keep the delinquents in during intermission or after dismissal, and in other ways to deprive them of their usual gratification. Some general failure led him to make the application to the whole school, and to persist in its enforcement until after dark. The time was about the middle of March, just after a great rain and thaw, when the roads were in a fearful condition, being full of deep ruts and mud-holes ; the night also was exceedingly dark and chilly. It showed a great lack of judgment ; but the issue had been joined, and he deemed it necessary for his subse-

quent control of the school to persist until his end was accomplished. When at last dismissed, both teacher and scholars saw that there was good cause of complaint, as many of the smaller pupils were put in much peril while attempting to reach their homes through the mud and darkness. The teacher began to apprehend that he might be called in question for the evening's disasters, which left him in no very agreeable mood.

In some of his oldest boys, however, the event had aroused the old Adam again, and they were bent on retaliation. No sooner, therefore, was the school dismissed than they rushed out to put their plans into execution. Passing up the road which the master had to travel with his favorite female pupil, they selected one of the deepest mud-holes; taking an old log from the roadside, they laid it directly across the road on the very brink of this puddle, and then hid themselves to watch the result. As the teacher had to remain and close up the schoolhouse after the scholars left, it gave them ample time to carry out their plan. In a short time they heard him approaching with his favorite pupil; unconscious of any danger, they were carefully picking their way along, engaged in conversation, when suddenly there was a stumble, a scream, a splash, and then both were floundering in the mud-hole, into

which they had fallen headforemost. Mouth and eyes, ears and nose, were filled with the unctuous mass; and, with clothes dripping, they finally crawled out of the hole, crestfallen and most pitiable to behold, their condition not at all improved by the shout of triumph which greeted their ears when the young Arabs sprang from their hiding-places and rushed away.

The result of all this was that the district was again left without a teacher.

The chief of this band of young Arabs was known in the neighborhood as Dave Overocker. He was about seventeen years of age, a man in size, an adept in mischief, and a mere child in knowledge. His father ran a small sloop on the Hudson, engaged in carrying paving-stones to the city of New York. The old man was entirely without education, and entertained the once quite prevalent opinion that book-learning was of very little value. His own idea of intellectual culture was very tersely expressed by his saying,

“It won’t help put the stones inter the boat nor get the sail up when the wind blows. Old Dave Overocker has made his bread and butter without’n any of your book-larnin’, and I guess young Dave will have to sail in the same boat.”

When at his work, the old man would attend to



his duty faithfully, and keep on the side of sobriety; but whenever he paid a visit home, which was generally about once a month, he as uniformly indulged in a long spell of gross intoxication. During these fits he was cross and vicious, and especially vented his drunken wrath upon his son, whom he often drove from his house to find a lodging in a neighboring barn. Being thus cruelly dealt with by the father, there was a corresponding over-indulgence on the part of the mother, and between these influences the son was eminently fitted for his evil promotion.

Dave had naturally some good parts. His skillful leadership in mischief showed that he had ability susceptible of large development, and his really careful attention to his mother's wants evinced that he possessed a heart not wholly wanting in tenderness. Though she exacted nothing of him, yet he generally kept her wood-box full and brought most of her water from a neighboring spring. Besides this, he had been known to do many kind acts, which led the neighbors to remark that Dave had a kind heart, notwithstanding all his badness. In gunning, fishing, and smoking out woodchucks Dave was an adept, and gave most of his time to one of these vocations.

Stote Chivers was the constant associate and counselor of Dave. Of nearly the same age, he was less



in size; and though really possessed of superior mental endowments, he lacked the boldness and skill of his compeer, and readily deferred to him in all their plans of wickedness. His mother was a widow with three other children, whom she had to support on a small pension as the widow of a soldier of the war of 1812, eked out by such small sums as she could earn by house-cleaning and other employments. Stote's organization was of a finer mould than that of his leader, and his mind had received a much larger development, so that he was often reluctant to enter into some of the bolder enterprises of mischief from a quickening of his conscience as to the results. When finally involved in guilt, he was oftener found in a truly penitent mood, and struggled harder to break from his evil surroundings.

Jake Van Gilder completed the trio of leaders in the Arab district. This lad was much younger than either of his associates in evil. He was warm-hearted, generous, and excessively impulsive. He was given to evil habits mostly because circumstances forced him into such associations, whose pernicious influences he had not sufficient firmness to resist. His father was a pilot on a steamboat, and was very seldom at home, except for the short season in which the Hudson was closed with ice during the winter.

The three victories obtained during the winter under the leadership of these lads had given them quite a reputation among their schoolfellows, of which they were not a little vain, and they resolved to "fight it out on that line." In accordance with this determination, a few days after the victory of the mud-puddle a grand convocation of all the lads of the district was called to meet on the hill back of the town schoolhouse, to hold a free consultation as to future plans. At the head of this senate of young Arabs sat Dave Overocker,

"By merit raised  
To that bad eminence."

After many gratulations over the victories of the past and rousing orations from the president and his first lieutenant, Stote, it was unanimously resolved that no school-teacher should ever again be allowed to hold the sceptre of dominion over the free and independent youths of the district. Books were voted humbugs, and the inalienable rights of all lads declared to be to hunt, smoke out woodchucks, hook apples, and play ball indefinitely; and, finally, the three glorified chieftains were invested with unlimited authority to call into the field, armed and equipped, all the forces of the confederation whenever any future attempts should be made by the

school-committee to introduce another pedagogue into their dominions.

So much was the patriotic enthusiasm of the juvenile convocation fired by the circumstances, and the eloquence of their leaders describing the wrongs which they had suffered under the grim knights of the ferule, that, as they went down from the hill, sundry mullein stalks and thistles were ruthlessly cut down, and many an unfortunate tree and post that stood in the way carried the marks of their wrath until its latest day in deep dents and scars. Nor did this suffice, for two or three astonished flocks of geese were sent scattered and squalling before their fierce onslaught. Indeed, it required the soothing and quieting influences of a whole night's sleep before the roused and hot blood of the young patriots had cooled sufficiently to flow calmly again through its old channels.

## CHAPTER II.

### *DOCTOR TRUAT AND HIS DAUGHTER.*

**A**BOUT a year before the commencement of our narrative, Doctor Truat, an enthusiastic naturalist, had settled on the banks of the Hudson about three quarters of a mile from the Arab district schoolhouse. The doctor, who was now a widower, was a man of great taste and culture; and after a very successful professional life in the city, he had retired from active duties for the purposes of travel and a more careful culture and research in his favorite science of ornithology. His attention and interest in this department of natural science had been quickened into a passion by an intimate acquaintance with Audubon, whose home was on the same noble river, though much nearer the great city. Doctor Truat was often a welcome guest at the home of the great naturalist, and the two savans had many a pleasant ramble through the woods and along the streams, pursuing their feathered friends. To both of them a rare bird was a greater prize than the discovery of a gold-mine.

Miss Eveline Truat, the doctor's only daughter, who presided over his house, was equally gifted with her father, and had been for years his constant companion in all his travels and researches, being, if possible, even more enthusiastic in her love of birds. To study their habits, admire their beauty, and drink in the rich melody of their song had charms for her from which no glittering allurements of fashionable life could withdraw her. She was skilled with the pencil and brush, and could place her pets on canvas with so much skill as to call forth the warm commendations of the great bird artist himself. Nor was she less an adept as a taxidermist, as the rich collection of well-preserved birds in her father's cabinet abundantly showed.

Before settling on the Hudson, Doctor Truat and his daughter had made an extensive tour of nearly three years through the Old World. They not only went over the usual routes of the Rhine and the Nile, Paris, Rome, and Jerusalem, but visited Ceylon, China, and other parts of Asia, and returned by way of the Pacific Islands and South America. In all these countries the rich treasures of bird-life received special attention, adding many rare specimens to the doctor's cabinet and his daughter's portfolio. As to the birds of their native land, they knew them well, for they had visited nearly every

section, east and west, north and south, as well as being very familiar with the researches of Audubon, Wilson, and others. To gather together the rich results of all these years of accumulation had been one of Doctor Truat's objects in making a new home, in which he had prepared a large room and arranged his specimens until he had a museum of natural history that would have done credit to any public institution.

In settling down in their new home the greatest objection to overcome was the moral question as to the future employment of their time, for both the doctor and his daughter were under the influence of too high Christian principles to allow of a life of aimless indolence. But not being able definitely to settle this question before a permanent location was made, they had left Providence to indicate the path of duty, not, however, by inertly waiting for something to turn up, but by keeping a careful watch for openings of usefulness which might come under their observation.

No sooner had Doctor Truat become domesticated in the neighborhood than he began to make careful inquiries into its social and moral condition, which he soon found to be quite unsatisfactory—a fact which the reader will infer from the information that has already been given. Besides the disorganized



and turbulent condition of the school district, he learned that the nearest house of worship was about four miles off, and that no Sunday-school had ever been instituted in the neighborhood.

These unfavorable conditions of the community had often engaged the serious thoughts of both father and daughter, and had led to many earnest conversations as to plans of reformation. Being a new-comer in the district, and having no official connection with it, the doctor was reluctant to propose hastily such measures as would give hopes of a change for the better.

This was the shape in which matters stood at the time of the last disturbance mentioned in the preceding chapter. The influence of this event had quite exhausted the small stock of zeal possessed by the committee, and they had about reached the conclusion to make no further attempts to reopen the school, at least for that year. This result was hailed by the young rebels as a full confession of their power, and they were correspondingly exultant and determined. They could now enjoy to their fullest bent, like their prototypes of the desert, their wandering propensities, unrestrained by the ghost of the three "R's," which, according to the views of many at that early period, were regarded as comprising all that was necessary to a finished education.

Using the defective orthography which would naturally result from such training, "what use had man," was the argument, "for more learning than reading, 'riting, and to know 'rithmetic to the rule of three?"

At this critical juncture, when the district was near settling hopelessly on the side of ignorance and vice, Doctor Truat chanced to meet one of the school committee, who also exercised the functions of a justice of the peace, and made some inquiries respecting the future prospects of education in the neighborhood.

"Well, doctor," was the squire's reply, "we have about concluded to give up the trial in our district. We have made many efforts for several years, and our money has been quite thrown away. Our children have learned nothing but mischief, and our school only seems to serve the purpose of getting them together where they can more effectually concoct their plans to do evil. Why, this past winter they have driven three teachers from the district, and we think it quite useless to try another until some of our bad boys are got rid of in some way."

"Yes, I have learned some of these facts," replied the doctor; "yet I think we ought not to give up the case as hopeless. Children are managed in other places, and I do not think that those in our



district have such an extra amount of depravity as to place them quite beyond the hope of improvement. There must have been some want of skill or tact in the teachers employed, and a better selection may secure more promising results."

"That might be so," said the squire, "if we could only find such teachers; but the school has such a bad reputation no one has been found willing to reopen it on any terms. It is truly a bad state of things, but I don't see how we are to remedy the matter."

"Would you think it meddlesome in me," asked the doctor, "if I should try and hunt you up a teacher who would be willing to take the venture?"

"Oh no, quite otherwise; it would be a favor gratefully received," was the reply.

"Then I will see if something cannot be done," said the doctor. "We have responsibilities which we cannot throw off, and which it is criminal to neglect. You shall soon hear from me again."

"Thank you, doctor," said the justice; "I'm sure, if you can aid us successfully in our difficulties, you will have the gratitude of the whole neighborhood."

After returning home from this interview, the doctor rehearsed to his daughter the conversation held with the school official, and expressed his deter-

mination to secure a proper teacher and make an effort to reopen and reorganize the district school, believing that success might be achieved.

"I think," said he, "I understand where most of the difficulty lies. The majority of the children in the district, I find, are deprived of any well-ordered family government, as the fathers are mostly absent from home and the mothers far too indulgent. Then in conducting the school the teachers have either been incompetent or have fallen into the too common fault of merely enforcing the acquisition of the technicalities of knowledge, without bringing the scholar to realize any of its pleasures. And what is still worse—a fault almost universal with the teachers of our day—they have treated their pupils as though they were as heartless as the benches on which they were seated. They have been made to fear the rod, but never to love the teacher or the knowledge which he was employed to communicate. Now, if we can find a teacher who has some heart and a knack of making others feel something of its warmth, our district can be made to compare favorably with others in the state. To save so large a number of children from growing up in ignorance and acquiring the vices which are its sure attendants is surely a mission worthy of the most devoted Christian benevolence, though it may not have the

romance of a foreign field to induce one to undertake it."

While the doctor was thus giving utterance to his thoughts, his daughter had listened with earnest attention; and as she had been seeking divine guidance to open up to her some path of usefulness, it seemed plain to her that this providence was a call to duty; so, after a few minutes' prayerful reflection, she said:

"Father, why may not I undertake this much needed work? True, I have no experience as a professional teacher, but I have some little ability, and, I trust, tact to use it; and I am sure that my heart is deeply touched with the neglect and needs of the poor children whom I have met since we moved into the neighborhood. With the blessing of Heaven, I think I could succeed in a reasonable degree at least."

This proposition was so unexpected to the father that for some moments he stood quite perplexed and unprepared with an answer. The pleasure of his daughter's constant presence was the great charm of his life; besides, he shrunk from the burden and anxiety which it would necessarily impose upon her. But after reflection he saw that it was but a poor exhibition of Christian benevolence to ask some one else to make the sacrifice, while he should stand

aloof and rejoice in the attendant blessing; and so he ended the hesitation by repeating in part his daughter's question:

"Why not undertake the accomplishment of the much needed work? Truly, my daughter, I cannot urge any tangible reason if you feel your heart drawn out to assume the responsibility. My only objections will be personal ones. I shall sadly miss your constant assistance and sympathy in my studies, and it will, I fear, impose upon you a heavy burden of care and labor, too severe for your physical energies. But if, in view of all the circumstances, you feel your heart so deeply interested in the welfare of the neglected children of the district as to impel you to make the venture, I shall not stand in the way of your purpose."

"Then, father," replied Eveline, "you may inform the committee that I will undertake the school on the positive condition that I am to be permitted to carry it on in my own way for at least three months, when I will be prepared to surrender my charge if I do not succeed in meeting just expectations."

"Very well, my daughter," said the doctor; "I will inform the officials of your purpose, and I have no doubt that they will think favorably of your proposal, as they can lose nothing by the experiment,

and may be, as we hope, largely the gainers. They will understand that you enter upon the undertaking with no mercenary motives; and therefore the only inference can be that you are seeking the good of your pupils."

"In which conclusion, father, they will certainly judge correctly; for, thanks to your liberality, my wants are so abundantly supplied that I have no need of any addition to my income, even after enjoying the luxury of doing some good—a pleasure which I am sure will be all the sweeter when I can appropriate means which I have earned by my own efforts. Whatever compensation may be allowed I shall use in such a way as will aid in making my efforts a success by providing means of instruction and innocent gratification, which, I think, will be a new experience to my scholars."

"May God bless your work, and crown your mission with most abundant success," was the earnest response of the father.

Doctor Truat immediately sought out the committee, and laid before them the proposition of his daughter, at which they were greatly surprised. Their only hesitation to accept the offered service was from a fear that a woman could not possibly govern such an unruly set of youths.

"Why," said one of them, "Dave Overocker can



hold your daughter out at arm's length, and hardly have to make an effort."

"That may be true," replied the doctor; "but my daughter does not expect to try her physical strength with any of her pupils, but hopes to inspire them with so much confidence in her love and esteem for them that they will take pleasure in doing what she requires of them."

With this understanding, her terms were accepted, and she was commissioned with authority to open the school once more; and immediately the usual notices were posted on the schoolhouse door and at the several road-crossings, giving notice of the fact and of the day of commencement.

No sooner was this done than there was a mighty commotion in the young Arab confederation. It was regarded as an open declaration of war, made the more galling from the fact that they who had conquered three men in one winter were now threatened with the rule of a woman. Then there was a speedy reconconvocation of the grand senate of urchins on the appointed hill, that in grave debate they might take adequate measures to meet the common enemy. The rallying cry was, "Down with the new teacher!"

The result of the conflict thus threatened will be the theme of the subsequent pages of this volume.

## CHAPTER III.

### *PREPARING FOR THE CONFLICT.*

WHEN Miss Truat had decided to attempt the reformation of the rebellious district, it became a matter of some importance to learn just what the trouble was, and she set herself diligently to find out. In pursuance of this object, she visited various sections of the neighborhood, conversed with the families, and carefully searched after the hidden causes of all the mischief. She easily traced the leadership to the lads already mentioned, but, from all the facts brought to light, felt convinced that they were not sinners above all the boys in the state. With proper management, she did not regard their case as at all hopeless. They had hearts and minds, but no efforts had been properly made to reach either. They knew enough of coercion, which heart and mind naturally resist, but nothing of the stronger allurements of sympathetic tenderness and minds quickened with the love of knowledge. The uniform administration of the school had been the law of might, with the attendant insignia of ruler



and hickory rods. The method of teaching was the old and absurd one of mere appeals to the memory. Each individual child, when learning the alphabet, was called up in turn, and the master with a pointer would direct the eye of the child to some one letter and ask, "What letter is that?" If not known to the pupil, he would give the name, and thus the process would go on through the whole series; then the child would be sent back to its hard bench and told to do an impossibility—keep still while a dozen or more went through the same process.

In the same manner the multiplication table was attempted, and thus nearly every other study was pursued in the school. A few, more especially among the larger girls, made some progress in spite of this stupid system, but most generally, when the term closed legitimately, which was rarely the case, the pupils were about where they had commenced. The plan had never been attempted of repeating the lessons in concert, which necessarily relieves the recitation of much of its dullness and begets some enthusiasm; nor had it ever entered into the scope of the teacher's methods to invest the lesson with some attractions by story, pictured illustration, or apt incident, that would show the pleasures and value of the study they were attempting. Such things as object-teaching, blackboard, globes, and maps were

wholly unknown in the school. Indeed, it seemed as though the eye had been quite overlooked in the processes of education in the district, except as it served to distinguish the forms of letters and figures, and their combinations. It seemingly had never occurred to the teachers employed that the thing itself would ever have more attractions to the children under their care than the language in which it was described, however well chosen that might be. In childhood the eye is the first sense that receives a sharp quickening, and ever after it is "never satisfied with seeing." That teacher is but poorly qualified for his office who does not make the best possible use of the pupil's eye in his educational system.

With these facts fully before her, Miss Truat formed her plans. A large blackboard was procured, a small globe from her father's study, some dissected maps, and other important requisites. And further, being convinced that whatever interested her most she could make most attractive to others, she resolved to avail herself of her knowledge of birds, the ability she possessed to portray them on canvas and preserve their lifelike forms, and thus appeal to the eyes of her pupils to aid in awakening their intellects, and at the same time secure their confidence and affection—a happy thought,

as the subsequent pages of this volume will aim to show.

The young Arabs were not idle all this while, and several grave consultations were held, especially among the leaders, as to the best plans for carrying on the coming contest. But not knowing just the modes which the new teacher might adopt, they could settle upon nothing definitely, except that she was to be driven out like her predecessors, leaving the manner of the attack to the decision of their leader. Thus empowered, Dave felt the responsibility resting upon him, and resolved to act with a promptness worthy of the occasion, and thereby add new glory to the laurels already obtained.

While these mutual preparations were in progress, the momentous day arrived which was to test their wisdom.

Doctor Truat had secured a proper renovation of the schoolhouse. It was thoroughly cleansed, windows mended, broken seats and writing-desks repaired, all of which was much needed to remove the reminiscences of the past winter's battles.

Miss Truat had received some intimations of the intended assault, and felt the importance of thwarting the intention until she could have time to gain the confidence of the school; hence she resolved to give no occasion for an outbreak. She determined

to exact nothing of her scholars, but would strive to lead them, thus avoiding a collision of authority, remembering the old adage that it "takes two to make a quarrel."

In pursuance of her purpose, she was early at the schoolhouse with her requisites. A large blackboard stood in the hall ready for setting up, a fine globe occupied her table, with several dissected maps, while several well-mounted ones hung upon the walls. Besides these things, properly belonging to the purposes of education, she had placed on a large shelf back of her desk a small glass case containing some dozen of her smallest and most beautiful birds. It was, indeed, the gem of her father's collection—red, azure, and golden in plumage, and of forms the most graceful. The birds were perched and pendent on mossy limbs, some with needle-like bills dipping into the opening flowers or intertwining the threads of lint and hair into tiny nets, while others were placed on the rim of one already completed, in which reposed one or more little mottled eggs. All these had been so nicely arranged as to assume an appearance as life-like as it is possible to give to things fixed and motionless. Charming as it did even the most cultivated tastes, she felt sure it would have power to attract and hold the gaze of the young untutored subjects she should have to

deal with, to whom it would be a thing undreamed of. With this collection she had also brought a small portfolio of some of the larger birds, beautifully drawn in water colors—specimens of art of which no artist need have been ashamed.

With these helps and a determination to use all her abilities to the best possible advantage, and to exercise patience to its utmost limit, she awaited the gathering of the children, trembling but hopeful.

With no zeal for punctuality, but only intent to spy out the situation, Dave Overocker was the first one at the school on the morning of the opening. As he approached the door he saw standing in the hall a small and pleasant-faced person, whom he at first thought to be one of the larger female pupils, but was undeceived as the teacher turned to him and with a cordial greeting said :

“Oh, good-morning, sir! I am so glad you have come before the smaller children, for I have been trying to get my blackboard in place, and find I am not quite strong enough, and shall be much obliged to you for a little help.”

The leader of the young Arabs looked at the little woman for a moment as though meditating a gruff refusal, but was met by such a pleasant, kindly look that he instinctively took hold of one side of the board and helped to carry it into the school-



room and adjust it in a proper position. When this was done, Miss Truat said, with great kindness of manner, having some idea of the person whom she was addressing :

“Thank you ; that is very nicely done ; and as you will likely be one of my largest scholars, I may often have to ask your assistance, and hope we shall have a nice time together. Your name is David, I believe ?”

“Yes, Dave Overocker is what they call me,” was the somewhat rude reply of the lad as with a look of surprise he caught a sight of the globe and case of birds—objects entirely unknown to him, and full of wonder. Observing that his attention was strongly arrested, Miss Truat thought it a good opportunity to make a favorable impression ; she therefore said, as she saw him intently gazing at the globe :

“Come here, David, and let me show you what this thing is for. This ball represents the earth, and shows its motions, by which the recurrence of day and night is produced, and summer and winter follow each other. It also shows us the location and shape of all the countries on the earth. Here is North America ; and this little circle represents the city of New York ; and here is the Hudson River ; and about here is where we live.”

The boy's eye followed the directing finger of the

teacher, and the glow of his countenance showed that his mind had caught the great fact which the globe was designed to illustrate; and there he stood, with his eyes and mouth open, interested in spite of himself. Miss Truat skillfully pushed her advantage by calling his attention to the beautiful case of birds, naming the various specimens, and asking David to designate such of them as he had seen in the woods, among which he was quick to notice the blue jay, red-winged blackbird, and the yellow bird. To be asked to tell what he knew was so unusual that he became quite voluble and confidential, and even gave some really new and interesting facts to Miss Truat in regard to the habits of the blue jay, showing that the boy had a quickness of observation for which he had never been credited. When the case of birds had been looked over, Miss Truat opened her portfolio and showed the paintings it contained, giving the names of the birds represented, and where they were found, with some interesting facts concerning their habits. While thus engaged, David forgot all about his purpose to plan for the expulsion of the new teacher; and just at this happy juncture Miss Truat made another fortunate advance by which her chief enemy was nearly overcome before the battle was really joined. In turning over her drawings she happened to open to a large horned owl that seemed particu-



larly to arrest the boy's attention, which the teacher perceiving, she said :

"By the bye, David, as I came to school this morning, I saw a large snowy owl in the grove up the road which I should like very much to have ; and if you can get it for me, I shall be so much obliged to you, and will pay you well for it too. Besides, I will show you how to prepare it like one of the birds in the case, and we will have it here in the schoolroom to look at, and we can learn all about its habits."

This appeal was addressed to one of Dave's weak points. He was accustomed to be called a booby in school, but no one doubted his ability to shoot and to snare birds and rabbits ; these were his brag accomplishments, and here was the new teacher calling upon him to exercise his gifts. It was a new mode of teaching, he thought, but a most agreeable one to him ; and so, with a hearty promptness, he replied :

"I'll get him for you, Miss Truat, if he don't fly away before school is out."

"Oh, I shall be so delighted, David, and we will have a nice time fixing him up as natural as life. Please keep his beautiful feathers as free from blood as possible."

Just then the conversation was interrupted, very much to the regret of both, by the arrival of young

Chivers, who was not a little astonished to see his leader and the new teacher engaged in such confidential intercourse, and with such unusual surroundings. This intrusion seemed to arouse Dave from his forgetfulness of his position, causing a flush to pass over his face as he thought of the part he was expected to act, and a dawning sense of his inability to meet the expectations of his comrades. He had been treated with a kindness and confidence to which he was an entire stranger, begetting a sense of pleasure which led him to yearn for further gratification. And then he had made a promise to the teacher which he knew not how to evade without acting a part so dishonorable that even he shrank from it with repugnance.

In this condition he was in a great quandary whether to disregard his pledge and rudely assail the teacher who had treated him so kindly, and thus maintain his ascendancy among his companions, or, yielding to the awakening impulses of a better life, cultivate the intercourse which had so unexpectedly and unintentionally on his part begun between him and Miss Truat. Not being able to make a full decision then, he resolved to evade the issue, and leave the solution to future developments. Hence he kept his promise to get the owl for Miss Truat to himself, resolving to take it to the doctor's house and there

make a delivery of his prize if so fortunate as to secure the bird. In the mean time, he could frame some excuse for delaying action until he could have full time for consideration.

While these thoughts had been passing through the mind of the young leader, the children had dropped in one after another, until, at the opening hour, the district was well represented by its juvenile population, each in turn wondering at the strange objects which met the sight.

The time for Miss Truat's trial had come; and when she tinkled her little bell to call the school to order, it seemed to her as though the beating of her heart was louder than the tones of its clapper. With a most fervent invocation for divine assistance, she began her mission of love, the success of which will be seen in the subsequent pages.

## CHAPTER IV.

### *OPENING THE SCHOOL.*

WHEN the children had taken their seats and become somewhat quieted, Miss Truat began her work by saying :

“Dear children, we have come here to be very happy, and I am to strive to lead you into the paths of knowledge, which will be to me a most delightful task if you will only try as earnestly to learn as I shall to teach you. We are not to have any rulers or hickory rods—they are not suggestive of pleasant relations or thoughts—but we are going to love each other very much, and love knowledge and that which is good, and then we shall all be very happy. That we may know how to find the right way God has given us a guide-book, and now let us consult it and see what directions it will give us. Here are some very plain instructions in the third chapter of Proverbs :

“ ‘Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding: for the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more

precious than rubies, and all things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honor. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her, and happy is every one that retaineth her. The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth, and by understanding hath he established the heavens. By his knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down dew.

“‘My son, let not them depart from thine eyes: keep sound wisdom and discretion; so shall they be life unto thy soul, and grace to thy neck. Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble. When thou liest down thou shalt not be afraid: yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet. Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked when it cometh. For the Lord shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken.’

“This is God’s true word, children, and it tells us what wisdom is worth and how much pleasure it will bring, and we are here to learn how to find its rich treasures. The world is full of beautiful things, but we may never know anything about them, nor taste of the pleasures which they will afford, unless we search them out; and this is the purpose of schools. Here

are the letters of the alphabet. You can all see them plainly enough, but perhaps some of you cannot tell one from another, and to such they are only so many black marks of different shapes. But when we have learned their names and sounds, we can then put them together and form words, which are the names of things or acts, and by use of these we can tell others about the objects which we have found out, or read what they have investigated. This is the way in which books are made and letters are written and knowledge is handed down from one generation to another. Now, we may learn all the words in the spelling-books and dictionaries, and yet know little or nothing about the things in the world; it is necessary therefore to take the object to which we give a name and search into its composition and purposes, and then we begin to enjoy the pleasures and profits of wisdom, and to learn how much we owe to our gracious heavenly Father, who has made everything so very good.

“What a marvelous number of things we have to talk about!—the trees and the flowers, the rocks and the pebbles, the rivers and the brooks, the lakes and the oceans, the animals and the fishes. Wherever we turn, God has made something beautiful or useful for us to study out and enjoy, that our hearts may be led in adoring gratitude to him. We shall



learn something about all these things in our books, and to make them plainer I will draw many of them on this blackboard, and describe them as well as I can, so that while you are acquiring the name you will also learn something of the object to which it is applied. It is rather dry work to simply learn how



FIG. 1.—*Boy and Dove.*

to spell a name, but there is always a pleasure in searching out the wonders of nature, and this is what we are going to try in our school, and I hope before we get through with our studies we shall have many very happy hours together and acquire much useful knowledge.



"I will now draw a picture on the blackboard."

Miss Truat turned to the board, and in a few minutes had traced on it the figure of a boy caressing a dove (Fig. 1)—a proceeding which greatly interested the children, as they had never witnessed anything like it. When she had completed her picture, she turned to the school and asked :

"What do you call this?"

"A boy and a bird," was the prompt reply from several of the scholars.

"Yes, that is correct, children—a boy and a bird. Now, we know what they are because we see them ; but you may want to tell some of your friends what you have seen ; and as they are living a long way off and you cannot talk to them, you must have some other way of communicating our information, and this we do by writing their names, thus :

BOY. BIRD.

"Now, let us all spell these names. . . . That is very well indeed. We have now got the names of the objects in our picture, but you see the boy and the bird are doing something, and we want to tell our absent friends that also, and so we must have some other words to write down. I wonder if any of my scholars can tell what else ought to be written?"

"The boy is holding the bird," was the response

of several, and "The bird is spreading its wings," the reply of others.

"Very good," said Miss Truat; "both replies are correct. Now, let us spell all these words together. . . . Very nicely done. We have now learned something about our picture ourselves and are prepared to give the information to others, and at the same time we have acquired more than half the letters of the alphabet and understand how to use them. This is the way in which I propose to teach you. We shall not only learn how to form words, but also to understand something of the objects to which they are applied; and I am sure, if we all try to make the best use of our opportunities, we shall find that the pleasures of knowledge more than repay the efforts which we may make to acquire it."

During the entire forenoon Miss Truat pursued her course of object-teaching, making drawings on the blackboard, then naming them, after which she had her pupils to spell the words used and then read over the entire sentence. When this had been done, she would have some interesting story or some facts to relate, and in this way she succeeded in keeping the close attention of the school, not excepting those of the boys who had come to the opening of the session with the avowed purpose of breaking up the school by personally assaulting the teacher. The

method of teaching was so unusual and the manners of the teacher so kind and sympathetic as quite to perplex those disposed to mischief and derange all their predetermined plans.

Just before dismissing for the noonday intermission, Miss Truat turned to her case of beautiful birds, which had been the delight of all their young eyes, and said :

“Children, this afternoon I will tell you some stories about the beautiful birds and show you my drawings which I have in this portfolio, and I have also a proposition to make which I think you will all like. And now, as we are to have our noonday intermission, I want you to play and enjoy yourselves, but do not be rude or boisterous. The way to be happy is to be kind and obliging one to another. The blessed guide-book from which we have already taken counsel tells us that ‘anger resteth in the bosom of fools,’ and I hope we have none of that class in our school.

“To contribute to your enjoyment I have some very pretty grace-hoops, and will teach you how to use them, for we can toss them about at our pleasure with no fears of breaking windows or noses, they are so light. For the boys who wish to go out on the green, here are a couple of nice balls. Play with them as earnestly as you please, but do not be rough

in manners or language. For these dear little folks I have some beautiful alphabet blocks and dissected pictures. These things will do to begin with, but by and by we may find something else to be wanting, and then I shall take great pleasure in procuring whatever may add to the enjoyment of your hours of play. Let us all repeat a little verse before we are dismissed, and make it our prayer, and then we may have a happy hour for our nooning. Now I will write it on the board, and then we will all repeat it together :

‘Keep me, O Lord, from every ill,  
And guide my feet where’er I stray ;  
Help me to do thy righteous will  
Whene’er at study, work, or play.’

“Children, we are serving God when we are trying to make each other happy, and we can certainly strive to do this in our playing when we all are seeking enjoyment. Let us all try and prove the truth of this during our intermission.”

When finally at liberty for an hour, the whole group of children seemed in such a mood as to be little disposed to avail themselves of the usually coveted opportunity for romps, noise, and mischief. The whole proceeding of the new teacher was so unexpected and out of the ordinary way of the dis-

trict as to leave them in a state of astonishment and wonder. She had been kind and gentle in manner, and had given them in reality the first true relish of the pleasures of knowledge, and they seemed reluctant to break the spell of enchantment, so they very quietly took their lunch-baskets, and were soon engaged in disposing of their contents. Miss Truat watched the process, and as soon as she saw that their young appetites were satisfied she took another step, which had been premeditated, in order to prevent any consultation between those who had concocted the previous outbreaks in the school. Taking her grace-hoops, she called upon some of her oldest girls to take part with her, and then, turning to David and Staughton, who were on the point of leaving the room together, asked them to join in the exercise. The solicitation brought a deep blush to both of their faces and a hesitancy which was more from real timidity than the consciousness of harboring any ill intentions. Miss Truat placed the sticks into their hands, and then, giving her hoop a toss into the air, she caught it as it came down, and repeated the process several times to show how the thing was done. After this brief instruction she gave the hoop a toss to David, with directions to pass it on to the next, and soon they were earnestly engaged in the pleasant amusement, while most of



the other children were looking on with an interest almost equal to that enjoyed by the parties in the exercise.

By this skillful management the much-feared occasion for evil counsels passed by, and the teacher had another half day to deepen the impression she was striving to make upon the hearts of her new charge.

It is unnecessary to follow Miss Truat further in her new mode of teaching; it needs only to add that she persevered in the method of object-lessons and class recitations as far as they could be employed, trying to instruct her pupils rather than pursuing the usual and mistaken method of forcing them to learn mere arbitrary terms. She enjoined no tasks, but endeavored to excite the mind to activity by a desire to know the nature and uses of the facts under consideration. The main purpose in the subsequent pages of this book will be to trace the special employment of birds in her mission of instruction and reformation. To Miss Truat these became special agents to reach both head and heart, and were well chosen, as, it is believed, the sequel will show.

At the reassembling for the afternoon's session the lessons on the blackboard were resumed, and some further instruction given in the more direct line of common school teaching, after which Miss Truat



placed her case of beautiful birds on her table (see frontispiece), and turning to the children, said :

“Do you not think, children, that the world would be very dreary if there were no flowers?”

“Yes, indeed, teacher,” was the response from nearly the whole school.

“So I think,” continued Miss Truat; “a world without flowers would be a very sombre place. How they beautify the fields and the woods and make the air fragrant when there is no careful hand to give them loving culture! but when we take them from their wild birthplaces and from the companionship of vulgar weeds and place them in a rich border, how they seem gratefully to repay our kindness! They grow larger, and double and treble their beautiful petals; their bright colors become deeper and richer; and they make us feel as if we are getting back very near Paradise when, like Adam, we are dressing and keeping the borders where they are growing. We ought to be very thankful to our heavenly Father for his gracious gift of flowers, and should love him more than we love them. But the flowers have no voices, and cheer us with only a brief existence renewed year after year. They are fixed and motionless, except when they are stirred by the wind or plucked by the hand, and then their fragrance is soon lost and their beauty fades. They are, indeed,

the chosen emblem of that which is frail and fleeting. In the Bible, flowers are often used to enforce on our attention the brevity of human life: 'As for man, his days are as the grass; as a flower of the field so he flourisheth: for the wind passeth over it and it is gone, and the place thereof shall know it no more.' And, truly, our life is

'A fading flower, a ray of light,  
So brief we scarcely hail the dawn  
Ere shadows come, and endless night  
Broods o'er the scene, all brightness gone!

'The morning dew, a fleeting shade,  
As springing grass ere noon cut down;  
'Tis green at morn: it feels the blade;  
The evening comes: 'tis crisp and brown.'

"But look at these birds; what beautiful forms and gorgeous plumage, vieing with the flowers in their splendor! and though these specimens are fixed and motionless like the flowers, yet each one has thousands of living representatives in the summer groves, hopping from spray to spray, and pouring forth a constant chorus of song. If the loss of the flowers would make the earth sad, then how much greater would be the calamity if all the birds were taken away and the fields and groves left to a dreary silence! The dear beautiful birds! how they cheer us during summer and sunshine! and even

through the dreary days of winter some of them remain to gladden its chilling solitude with an occasional song to remind us of the bright days that have flown and quicken us with hopes of others yet to come. What of earth can be more beautiful than a living group of birds like these? Or what song is more melodious than that heard when a full spring chorus of feathered warblers are filling the groves with their joyful anthems? Oh, I have loved the birds all my life; I have watched them in the woods and fields, studied their habits, painted their beautiful likenesses, and prepared their inanimate forms, like these which I now show you. With my father I have travelled over a large part of the world to see the birds of different countries, and have hundreds of their pictures to show you, and many stories to relate about them which I am sure will please and instruct you. And now the proposition I have to make is this: I will show you all my pictures, and occasionally invite you to visit my father's cabinet, where I can show you the birds of foreign lands, and you can thus see how many of them differ from those you have been accustomed to in our woods and meadows. Another thing I have to propose, which I am sure will be very pleasant to us all: it is that we shall spend a half day or more now and then in rambling through the groves and fields, that we may

search out the birds in their native haunts and study their habits, the construction of their nests, and the form and color of their eggs. We will have some shelves made; and if the boys will get me specimens of the birds of the neighborhood, I will prepare them just as I have those in this case, and we can thus in a few months have quite a pretty collection of our own. We can also get one or two of each species of eggs found in the neighborhood; and when the birds have hatched out the remainder, we can get the nests also and place the eggs in them, and then we shall be able to learn all about their construction, and in some of these nests we shall find wonderful skill and ingenuity exhibited. In carrying out this purpose I do not wish you to be cruel to the birds, nor ruthlessly to destroy their nests or eggs. To feed the body we have to take the life of many animals; God gave them to be food for us, but that does not allow us to treat them cruelly nor destroy them in mere wantonness. So to feed the nobler mind and to gain a knowledge of the whole species we may take a single specimen for the purposes of study. And thus with the eggs: the bird will not notice the loss of one or two from the nest, and we only want this number from each to make up our collection. In this way, before our term closes, we can learn a great deal of the natural his-

tory of birds and of the wisdom and goodness of God in their creation.

“Now, dear pupils, having told you something of my purposes, it only remains for me to say that all I ask in return is that you will be kind and good, and that you will strive earnestly to learn all you can and be happy, and be assured that I shall do everything in my power to make you so. We have had a very pleasant day together, and I have not had the least occasion to find fault with any of you, and I shall now dismiss you, hoping that this day is but a fair specimen of those we shall hereafter spend together.

“To-morrow I shall have some beautiful pictures of the eagles to show you and several interesting stories to relate, and shall hope to see you all here to enjoy the occasion ; and so, good-night.”

The results of the day had wholly deranged the plans of the malcontents. They had found no occasion to resist the authority of the new teacher, nor had any tasks been imposed upon them at which they could complain. They had rather found themselves under a spell which took away all desires of disobedience. But pride of power and place has its hold on the young as well as on the old, and therefore the usual conflict was experienced by the leaders of the young Arabs. They really had been



so deeply interested in the exercises of the day that they no longer cherished a disposition to commence an opposition; yet they were not quite willing to confess their weakness and give up their leadership. They very naturally; therefore, came to the usual conclusion under such circumstances—to evade any issue on the subject, and let the future work out the results. But the nervous anxiety of each one to place himself right on the record defeated this non-committal policy, for hardly had they left the school-house door before Jake Van Gilder began to taunt Dave for his day's failure, saying:

"Dave Overocker, you're a coward! Why didn't you give the signal to-day? Why, you just let that little snip of a woman do just as she pleased with you."

"Jake," said Dave, angrily, "don't you call me a coward, or I'll show you whether I'm one mighty quick. But how could I do anything? Why, she just rattled on from one thing to another so that we had no chance, and showed her pictures and birds; and didn't you see that she completely bamboozled the whole school?"

"Yes, and I guess she has hit you on the weak spot too," responded young Van Gilder.

"You just let me alone," was Dave's reply; "she's only pulling the wool over our eyes. I don't think



such sweetness will last long, and you bet I'll take the first chance to astonish her a little. Isn't that the best way, Stote?" said the leader, turning to that lad.

"Well, I guess so," was the reply, though in fact Staughton had resolved to have nothing to do with any assault on Miss Truat. Her kindness of manner had won his heart, and her new method of instruction had given a sharp quickening to his intellect; hence the thought of having her driven away was painful. But as he lacked the moral courage to boldly avow his better sentiments, he was glad to escape with the indefinite answer which he had given. This ended the colloquy, and the children separated to their homes, where their stories of the strange methods of the new teacher excited almost as much wonder as they themselves had experienced.

## CHAPTER V.

### *THE GUARDIAN OF THE BIRDS' NESTS.*

AFTER the dismissal of her scholars, Miss Truat remained at the schoolhouse for some time to set her things in order and lock up her case of birds in a closet which had been provided. While thus engaged she heard a heavy step in the entry, and going to see who it was, became excessively frightened at beholding a large and powerful man standing there staring wildly at her, barefooted and bare-headed. As soon as she appeared he thrust out his left arm, with the hand bent down, exposing the wrist, on which she noticed a large callus. The man at the same moment began swaying himself to and fro obliquely from right to left, balanced on his right foot, singing in a drawling tone :

“See-saw, dickery daw,  
Jim’s a-hungry !”

Miss Truat grew faint with fear ; and could she have done so, she would have rushed from the house, but there the strange being stood, effectually blocking

up the way. Remembering that she had most of her dinner yet in her basket, and taking the hint from his expressions of hunger, with as much coolness as possible she stepped back and placed the food on the table, and then said to the man :

“If you are hungry, here is something for you to eat.”

The intruder waited for no second invitation, but stepped to the table and began to eat most voraciously, while Miss Truat with a sudden spring rushed by him into the open air, most fortunately to meet her father, whose anxiety for his daughter had led him to walk to the schoolhouse to see after her progress.

“Oh, father,” said she as she fell into his arms, “there is a terrible-looking man in the schoolhouse who has given me a dreadful fright.”

“Why, my daughter, I hope he has offered you no violence?”

“No, father, but please go in and see what he is doing.”

Doctor Truat on entering the schoolhouse found the odd character standing before the case of birds, with his great restless eyes staring at them, while his body was energetically swaying to and fro. As soon as he noticed the entrance of the doctor he pointed his long finger at one of the nests in the case, and repeated with unusual emphasis his distich :

"See-saw, dickery daw,  
Jim knows."

The doctor at once surmised that the strange character before him was a well-known simpleton of the neighborhood called Jim Lee, whom he had long desired to meet, hoping that something might be done by proper medical treatment to mitigate his physical and mental infirmities.

Poor Jim was then about twenty years of age, being the son of very poor and thriftless parents. Their wretched home was located on the border of a dismal piece of swamp, where they eked out a scanty living by gathering roots, herbs, and berries in summer-time and the manufacture of a few baskets in the winter season. But from whatever source their revenue came, much the larger outgo was always for whisky and tobacco, leaving them little, even if they had cherished the disposition, to spend in efforts to relieve the misfortunes of their afflicted son. Mentally weak from his birth and utterly neglected by his parents, the poor lad's condition was indeed a sad one. He was not exactly a fool, but weak-minded; but the small spark of intellect had been left so long dormant as to seem nearly or quite extinguished at the time of his introduction to the reader. There were, however, some points of character which he manifested that indicated much

sharpness—so much so as to seem the quickenings of instinct rather than the processes of reasoning. His appetite had always been so enormously voracious that he was never known to stop eating when anything was before him that could be devoured; and his uniform salutation whenever he entered a house was to drawl out:

“See-saw, dickery daw,  
Jim’s a-hungry,”

which seldom failed, as the easiest way of getting rid of him, to bring out an ample supply of bread and cold meat. The result of all this was that he had grown up to be six feet four inches in height, and was correspondingly broad and burly. His feet were enormously large even for one of his size, and were always bare summer and winter, seemingly as tough and hardy as the hoof of an ox. The length of his arms and the size of his hands corresponded with the dimensions of his feet, and his whole make-up was well calculated to excite some alarm in any one who might meet him alone, unless acquainted with his harmlessness. Being a simpleton, he had always been the butt and sport of the young Arabs of the neighborhood, who always treated him with rudeness, and often with great cruelty. To protect himself it became a habit to hold out the left hand

and receive their blows on the wrist, which by their frequency had produced the callus before mentioned. Indeed, this wicked cruelty had produced such insensibility that he would himself, at the provocation of the boys, take a large club and inflict blow after blow on his own wrist with sufficient force to have broken the arm of an ordinary man.

His physical strength was wonderful; and when exasperated beyond endurance, he would hurl stones at his tormentors that would have taxed the strength of ordinary men to lift from the ground, which missiles had come near proving fatal in more than one instance. Ordinarily, however, Jim was of a quiet and harmless disposition, willing to bring wood and water for all who asked him; and this was the extent of his usefulness at home or abroad.

Dull as the poor simpleton was, he nevertheless seemed to have a sharp intuitive perception of character, and knew perfectly well at whose kitchens he would find the largest pieces of bread and butter, and a welcome to warm his bare feet in wintry weather. His susceptibility to acts of kindness might be called excessive, and he always showed his acknowledgment by looking for the axe or the water-pail so soon as he had disposed of his provisions. When not otherwise employed, he would stand for hours gazing at the sun, all the while keeping up his



swaying motion and repeating his rhyme, adding such disconnected remarks as his weak mind and meagre vocabulary supplied. Occasionally in these soliloquies he spoke of persons and characters in a manner that showed no little penetration and wit.

But the marked peculiarity which Jim manifested was his devotion to the birds. Most of his time was spent in roaming through the fields and woods watching his favorites and hunting up their nests. The annual flight of the pigeons was a continual holiday to Jim. When he saw a great flock coming, he would see-saw with the greatest vehemence, while his eyes would follow their flight, his whole countenance indicating the most enthusiastic delight, all the while repeating,

"See-saw, dickery daw,  
Pigeons! pigeons!"

increasing the emphasis until his chant would end in a fierce scream. Next to the flight of the pigeons, the migration of the wild geese seemed to afford Jim the greatest delight. No sooner did he hear the "cronk" of a squadron of wild geese than he would rush to get a view of them, fairly frantic with excitement until they had again passed out of sight. On such occasions he usually connected with his song a part of another nursery rhyme:

“See-saw, dickery daw,  
Goosey gander, where do you wander?”

For the nests of his pets Jim regarded himself as the special guardian. He spent hours in hunting for birds' nests, and there were probably but few in the range of half a dozen miles that he did not search out and frequently visit to look after the safety of his treasures; nor did he relax his care until the little fledglings were able to take wing with their parents. His skill in finding nests was wonderful, and of itself showed that there was a spark of intellect susceptible of cultivation. No nest was so close hidden in bush or thicket, or placed so high in the tops of the trees, that he could not find it; and once found, he must look into it and admire the contents. To do this he was often known to climb the tallest trees with a facility that was truly wonderful.

The great admiration which poor Jim manifested at the sight of a brilliant bird or a delicate mottled egg showed that he had a sense of the beautiful, and his watchful care over their safety evinced that he possessed great kindness of heart.

Doctor Truat had learned something of these facts in relation to the poor neglected young man, and was strong in the conviction that some mitigation of his unfortunate condition might be secured; hence he

had cherished a strong desire to meet Jim, in order that he might examine his case and administer the proper remedies. Rightly judging that the odd personage in the schoolroom was the simpleton of whom he had heard, he called his daughter, with the assurance that she had nothing to fear from the strange intruder who had caused her such fright. In a few words he explained to her his character as it has just been set before the reader.

“Come, my daughter,” said he, “you have little cause of fear from this poor man, whom Providence has thrown in our way, perhaps, that we may do him a service; and perchance you may find him a useful ally in some of your rambles, for he is as great a lover of birds as you are, and especially regards himself as the guardian of their nests.”

Thus assured, Miss Truat re-entered the schoolroom, where Jim was found gazing with an absorbed look at the case of birds. The nests seemed particularly to attract his attention. His look of disapprobation indicated that he regarded a trespass as having been committed on his rightful possessions. Ordinarily, in the fields, if one disturbed a bird's nest that he had discovered, it was done at some peril, as he was sure to resent this violation of his guardianship. As he gazed at the nests in the case he seemed to be hesitating whether he ought not to

resent this desecration of his treasures. To relieve his distrust, Doctor Truat tried to show him that no harm had been done by taking one or two eggs. This he did by putting four eggs into one nest, and then removing one with a nod, and afterward taking them all out, at the same time shaking the head, and putting three of them back again. This was repeated several times, Jim watching the process, when he seemed to catch the idea; and as was always the case when quickened with a thought, he indicated his pleasure by repeating,

“See-saw, dickery daw,  
Jim knows.”

As the poor simpleton was ever ready to follow any one who treated him kindly, the doctor had no difficulty in inducing him to accompany himself and daughter home, where he was well fed and most kindly treated. The doctor improved the occasion to examine into his physical and mental condition, the result of which only confirmed him in the opinion that the darkness of the latter might be greatly mitigated—a kindly service which he resolved to attempt after obtaining the consent of his parents.

After Jim had been abundantly fed and carefully examined, the daughter took him into the cabinet of her father and showed him all its feathered trea-



FIG. 2.—*The Ostrich and Nest.*

tures. Jim was wonderfully excited, especially when he saw the large and strange birds. A huge condor called forth the most emphatic expressions of delight, and so with a splendid flamingo. But the penguin seemed quite to nonplus him; it did not meet his ideas of a bird. To show this, Jim held out his great arms and flapped them on his sides, while with a broad grin he said,

“See-saw, dickery daw,  
Ho, ho! Jim knows.”



When, however, he came to examine the gigantic ostriches (Fig. 2) and their nest, filled with their monster eggs, his wonder culminated. He swayed to and fro in a perfect frenzy, his great eyes fairly staring and his refrain becoming wild as he repeated it over and over. Miss Truat was so startled by his manner that she called her father into the cabinet, who watched poor Jim's demonstrations with peculiar interest, remarking to his daughter:

"A mind that can be so moved at the sight of one of God's creatures has not been left so wholly destitute of man's great endowment as to be beyond hope of cultivation, which I trust we shall be able to demonstrate."

"He is, indeed, a strange creature," replied the daughter, "and I am sure I shall take great pleasure in rendering all the aid I can to alleviate his condition."

As the eggs of the ostrich had attracted Jim's particular attention, Doctor Truat placed one in his hand, which pleased him greatly. He turned it over and over, looked and grinned in a most delighted way, and then, touching the ostrich from under which it was taken, repeated his rhyme:

"See-saw, dickery daw,  
Jim knows."

"Yes," said the doctor, "Jim does know much



more than he has ever had credit for, and verily there has been great neglect, if not guilt, in allowing him to grow up so darkened and besotted as he is; and with your help, my daughter, we will see what can be done for this poor child of neglect. I will treat the body if you will administer to the mind, and the results of this day's experiment gives you at least bright hopes of success, whatever may be the consequences of my administrations."

"I will try my best, father; and if I fail, it will not be from want of zeal in my efforts."

"May God grant you success above your most sanguine expectations!" replied the doctor.

With these matured plans for his relief, Jim was dismissed with a bountiful supply of provisions, and made to understand that he was to come again, and should then have some more and see the birds again—two facts either of which was sure to make him punctual, which Jim seemed to indicate as he took up his load, and with a peculiar expression turned to the doctor and sung,

"See-saw, dickery daw,  
Jim knows,"

and started on his way home, going up the lane in a gait half swing and half walk, all the while keeping up a constant jabber to himself.

## CHAPTER VI.

### *STORIES ABOUT EAGLES.*

MISS TRUAT noticed, when opening her school on the second day, that David and Staughton were both absent, but came in some time after looking flushed and uneasy.

The Scripture lesson for the morning was a part of the thirty-ninth chapter of Job, commencing at the twenty-sixth verse: "Doth the hawk fly by thy wisdom, and stretch her wings toward the south? Doth the eagle mount up at thy command, and make her nest on high? She dwelleth and abideth on the rock, upon the crag of the rock, and the strong place. From thence she seeketh the prey, and her eyes behold afar off. Her young ones also suck up blood: and where the slain are, there is she."

After this exercise, most of the forenoon was spent with the blackboard and object-lessons, after which Miss Truat said:

"Children, yesterday I showed you some of the beautiful birds which God has made to delight our

eyes and to charm us with their songs; but birds are not all of this class, nor do they always inspire us

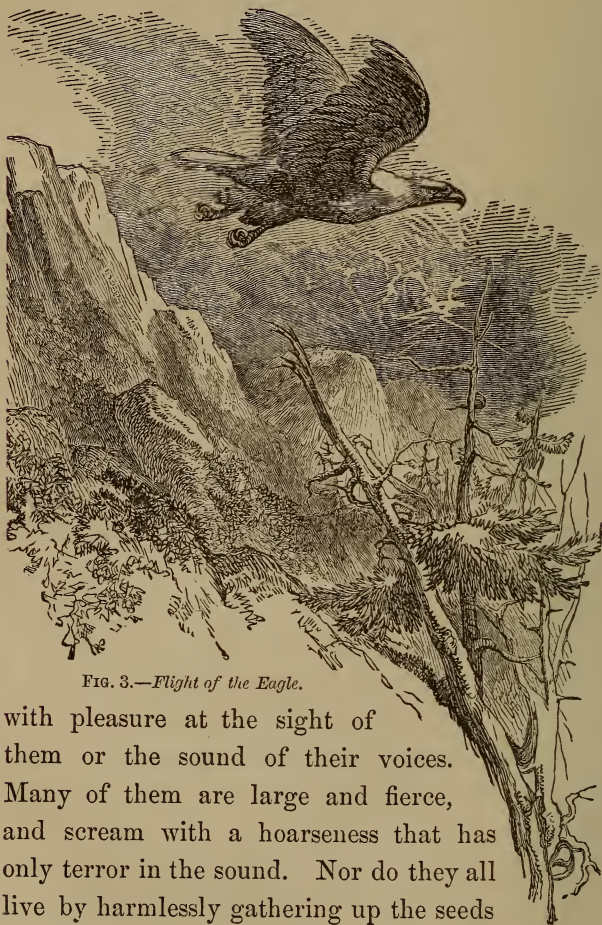


FIG. 3.—*Flight of the Eagle.*

with pleasure at the sight of them or the sound of their voices. Many of them are large and fierce, and scream with a hoarseness that has only terror in the sound. Nor do they all live by harmlessly gathering up the seeds

of poisonous weeds or troublesome insects, but ruthlessly prey upon smaller birds, animals, and even attack the young of large beasts, and sometimes carry off little children to satisfy their craving for flesh. Because of these evil habits, the learned have named these birds *Raptors*—that is, robbers—and *Accipitres*, those that seize rapaciously. To do their bloody work, they are provided with terrible long and sharp claws and strong hooked beaks. They possess great and powerful wings, and a sight so keen that they can see small objects on the ground when they are soaring high in the air. The eagle is the noblest bird of this class, though not the largest, and delights to soar in the sky, often far above the storm that is raging below; and in the language of Job which we read this morning, ‘From thence she seeketh her prey, and her eyes behold afar off.’ (Fig. 3.) According to my promise yesterday, I am going to show you some pictures which I have made of these great birds, and tell you about their habits; and I have also several stories to relate of their attempts to carry off little children with which to feed their young.

“Now we will have our nooning, and I hope another pleasant time, and then have our stories about the eagles.”

During the intermission Miss Truat could not

help noticing that her two largest boys seemed ill at ease and avoided as much as possible any intercourse with her. This led her to entertain a foreboding that they intended some mischief, yet were reluctant to begin until they found a plausible excuse, which she determined not to give them if she could possibly avoid it. The fact was that the tauntings of some of the larger boys, insinuating cowardice and fear of a little woman, had nerved Dave and Stote to a determination to make some demonstration that would preserve their prestige as leaders. Had Miss Truat used but one rough word or required one questionable act, the rebellion would have been an easy matter; but as she gave them no such occasion, it was an ordeal of determinate violation of conscience and personal rudeness from which they would gladly have escaped. But the love of power, which has brutalized so many older and wiser heads than theirs, carried the day, and the two lads had agreed on their way to school that morning to make an outbreak that day whether provoked or not. During the whole forenoon they had watched uneasily for a fitting opportunity, but the exceeding carefulness of the teacher had thwarted their desires, leaving them still hesitating. During the intermission they found opportunity to fix upon a plan to accomplish their object in the afternoon. In its execution



Dave was to rush out of the schoolhouse and to be followed by the rest of the boys, all making as much noise as possible, hoping thereby to frighten Miss Truat, so that she would not resume her teaching again. The design was whispered into the ears of some of the largest boys, who had always stood ready for active resistance, with the fullest expectation that they would still show their readiness to follow their leaders.

With a nervous anticipation of impending evil, Miss Truat began her afternoon's work.

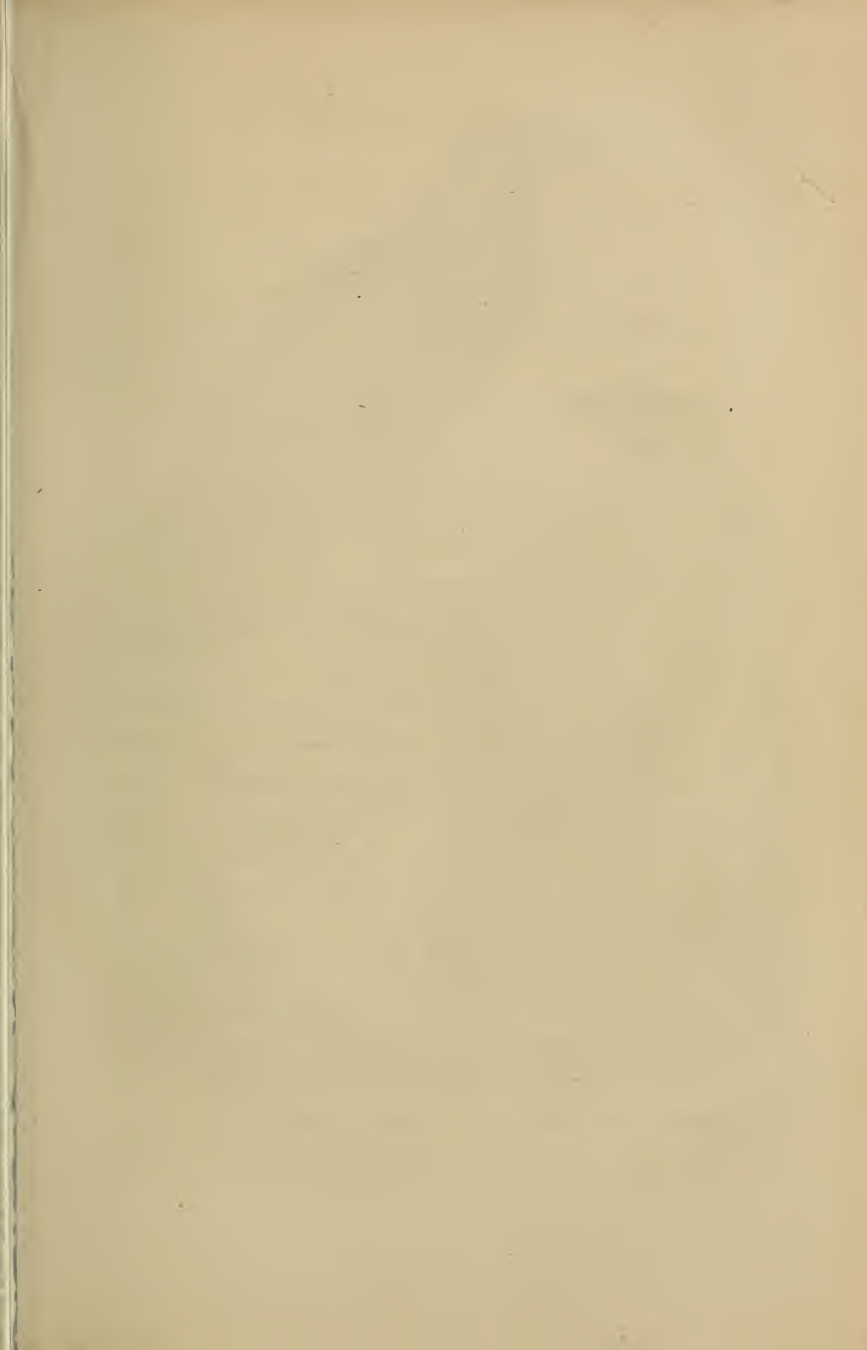
"Children," said she, "some of you may remember how an eagle attempted to carry off a little boy near the city of New York a year or two ago. The occurrence took place not far from my former home. The little boy and his brother were in a wheat-field amusing themselves by trying to use the sickles while the reapers were at dinner. While thus engaged a great eagle came sailing overhead, and with a sudden swoop seized the smallest boy and attempted to carry him off; but fortunately he only caught his clothes in his talons. They gave way, and the child escaped. The eagle, finding that he had missed his prey, lighted on the limb of a tree near by, and after waiting a few minutes made another dash after the boy, who now stood bravely on his defence. As the eagle made his swoop, and at-



tempted to fix his terrible claws in the lad, the latter made a vigorous blow with the point of the sharp sickle, which fortunately entered just under the left wing and penetrated the bird's heart, and the fierce robber fell dead before his brave little victim. On opening the eagle his stomach was found entirely empty, which accounted for his desperate attack on the boy.

"In the early settlement of Tippah county, Missouri, a similar occurrence took place which did not end so fortunately. During an intermission of one of the district schools, while the children were at play, a monster eagle made a dash into the group, and seized a lad about eight years old, named James Renney, and bore him off. The children screamed, and the teacher and some of the neighbors rushed out to save the boy, but the cruel bird was too high in the air, in which he soared higher and higher. By and by, when nearly out of sight, in some way the poor boy was loosened from the eagle's talons, and fell to the earth, and was dashed to pieces.

"These accounts, children, show that the eagles have been well named when they are called voracious robbers. Yet they are magnificent birds, and have always inspired the mind with ideas of nobleness and grandeur, and have been used in all nations as types of soaring ambition. They are re-





peatedly referred to in the Bible in this and other senses as a means of giving us instruction, and we may very properly, therefore, devote some of our time in learning something of their structure and habits, and then we will pass on to consider the more beautiful and useful birds.

"Here is a pair of splendid golden eagles," said she, at the same time taking from her portfolio a beautiful drawing in water colors of the birds named. (Fig. 4.) "These magnificent birds," she continued, "I drew from life. They were taken by my father, when but partly fledged, from a nest in the White Mountains, New Hampshire. (Fig. 5.) The nest was placed on a cliff upon one of the highest peaks of the mountain, and contained the somewhat unusual number of four birds. It was constructed with a few sticks put loosely together, but just sufficient to keep the eggs from rolling away. The eagle seldom lays more than



FIG. 5. *Eagle's Nest.*

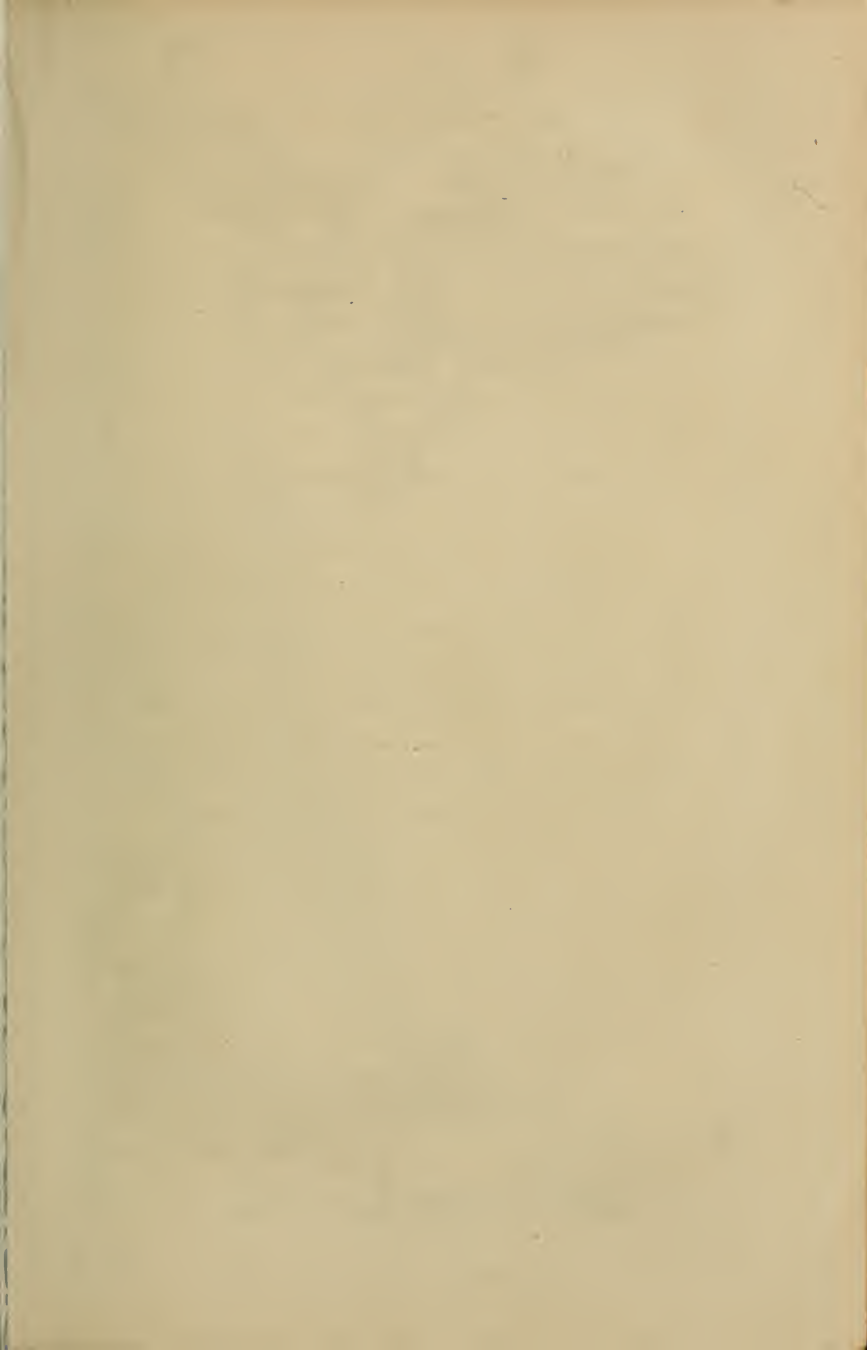
three eggs, which are of a dull white with cloudy patches of brown, and about the size of goose eggs.

"My father had to watch the nest from which these birds were taken for several days, the old

eagles were so fierce and vigilant; and it would have been very dangerous to attempt to remove the young when they were near by. During their protracted absence he secured his prize and hurried away, and a splendid pair of birds they made. They became very tame and playful, but never quite forgot their robber habits, having always retained a great fondness for a chicken dinner; hence the safety of our poultry-yard required that they should be restrained of their liberty.

“The golden eagles vary much in color, being seen of almost every shade of brown, often with a purplish or golden gloss; hence their name. The under part of the bird is occasionally of a glossy black, as is also the tip of the tail, while its base is more or less of a whitish cast. The tail-feathers of this bird are most highly prized by the Indians to ornament their heads and war dresses, and often a pony or rifle is given in exchange for the tail of a single eagle. The eagle has very expansive and powerful wings, often spreading eight or nine feet, and capable of bearing aloft very heavy bodies. Notice also the terrible sharp claws and powerful hooked beak, and we can see at once that he is a fearful enemy to contend with.

“There are about seventy species of this bird found in all countries, but the next best known







among us is the '*white-headed*' or '*bald eagle*.' This magnificent bird differs from the golden eagle principally in having the head, neck, and tail white, and in being much more rapid in flight. He is a true robber, for he not only manifests the rapacious disposition of his race, but hovers along the seashore where the peaceful fish-hawk is rearing his young; and when the latter has captured his finny prey, the bald eagle makes a dash at him and compels him to yield up his prize, which the bold robber takes to his eyrie and devours at his leisure.

"This eagle usually builds its nest in the top of some tall tree, and occupies it year after year if left undisturbed in its possession. The eggs are about the size of the golden eagle's, though more spherical and of a duller white.

"Look here, children," said Miss Truat as she took from her sketches a graphic picture that at once arrested the attention of the school; "this is an attempt to portray an incident that once occurred in Scotland, and you have been such good children I will tell you all about it. (Fig. 6.)

"A Scottish sailor had his home among the highlands of Scotland, where his wife and son Donald kept a few sheep to eke out a living while he was off at sea. On one occasion an enormous eagle was seen hovering over the flock, and it required all the

vigilance of mother and son to keep the hungry bird from carrying off some of their lambs. They were compelled to stand by the sheep constantly and follow them along the slopes as they fed gradually farther and farther from the cabin, in the door-yard of which a smaller child was left at play. Being two or three times foiled in his attempts to obtain a mutton dinner, he seemed to meditate a revenge for his disappointment. Leaving the location of the flock, he took his flight in the direction of the cabin, and after sailing around a few moments in wide circles, he made a plunge, took the child in his talons, and bore it aloft to his eyrie on a high crag of the mountain to feed it to his young. Donald saw the dreadful act, and shouted in agony to his mother, who was guarding the flock at some distance. When she looked, she saw her darling struggling in the claws of the bloodthirsty bird, which was high in the air, sailing off for his nest. With a wild shriek the mother started up the mountain on which the eagle's nest was situated, desperation seeming to lend her fleetness and superhuman strength. From crag to crag she almost seemed to fly with as much ease as the ravenous bird she was following, and was soon so far up the cliff as to hear the cries of her darling, which gave new energy to her efforts. Up, up she flies until she reaches the very top of the crag, but

the fatal nest is on the other side, on the very face of the promontory, with scarcely a foothold by which to reach it. But nothing daunted, she creeps around until she beholds the robber in whose claws her terrified child is still struggling. There she beheld also three wide-open and hungry mouths waiting until the fierce beak should divide her precious child to feed them—an act which the old eagle seemed just on the point of doing. He was too intent on his bloody purpose to notice the near approach of the mother of his victim. There was the fearful cliff at the foot of which stood poor Donald with clasped hands watching the daring steps of his mother, trembling as much for her as for the safety of his little brother. The mother paused not to mark the narrowness of the path she must tread, nor the fearful depths below; she thought only of her darling in the claws of the dreadful bird. With one desperate bound she lighted on the very back of the eagle, clasped her arms about his neck, and with her hands seized her child, who was under the bird.

“The eagle, surprised at such interruption, spread its wings, and with one bound dropped over the brow of the cliff, and was struggling in the air with his strange burden. In his desperate attempts to fly the eagle sufficiently broke the force of the fall, so that all came to the ground without serious injury,



where, by the brave efforts of the mother and Donald, the eagle was driven off and the poor child rescued with only a few scratches to tell of its wonderful aerial excursion as an intended dinner for the eagle's family.

"Notwithstanding the rapacious disposition of the eagle tribe, because of their power and bravery, keenness of vision, and lofty soaring they have been one of the chosen insignia of some of the mightiest nations, and have also served as a repeated Scripture metaphor. The image of an eagle surmounted the banners of imperial Rome, and, later, those of France, and a double-headed one those of Austria. The founders of our beloved republic did not overlook this bird of majesty, but blazoned him on our escutcheon, and bestowed upon him a new honor in calling him the 'Bird of Washington.'

"Then, from his mansion in the sun,  
She called her eagle-bearer down,  
And gave into his mighty hand  
The symbol of her chosen land."

"When you visit me, I will show you several preserved specimens of these majestic birds, including several species which are never found in our country, prominent among which is the fearful harpy eagle of South America, so ugly and fierce-looking

that we can well spare him from our catalogue of birds.

“Several species of eagles are very fond of fish, and are not reluctant to capture certain kinds which are accustomed to visit the shallow waters to bask in the sun. On one occasion an observing gentleman noticed a powerful eagle sitting on the limb of a tall tree overlooking a shallow in the lake at the base of the cliff

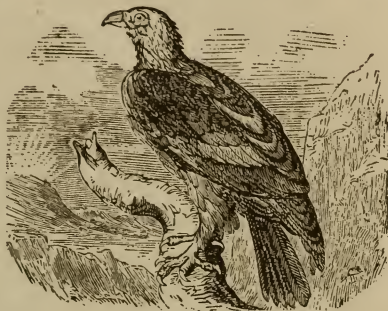


FIG. 7.—*Eagle Watching for Fish.*

on which the tree stood. (Fig. 7.) He was evidently watching something very intently in the water below. After a few minutes he was seen to make a sudden swoop; then there was a splash on the surface of the water, and soon the eagle reappeared with an enormous pike in his talons, which he attempted to bear aloft to the cliff on which he had been perched. But he soon found that he had got more than he had bargained for; the weight of the fish was too much for his muscle, and he was carried by the fish back into the water. Somehow the eagle's claws became so fastened into the sides of the fish that



he could not release them, and after a fierce struggle for his life, he was borne under the water, and



FIG. 8.—*An Eagle Drowned by a Fish.*

became the victim of his intended prey and his own rapacity. The gentleman obtained a boat, and

after a short search found both the eagle and the fish dead, still locked in their fatal embrace. (Fig. 8.)

“The sight of an eagle is truly wonderful. However high he may be in the air, even when almost out of range of our vision, he can see his prey, and with the directness of an arrow swoops upon it. His presence is sure to excite the greatest terror in a flock of ducks, geese, or pigeons, and they scatter with the utmost panic to escape his talons. He is a bold depredator, as the incidents already related abundantly prove; and to these many others might be added. He makes many visits to the pasture and the fold for his lamb, or snatches up the goose or chicken when better supplies cannot be obtained; hence he is dreaded by the farmer and the thrifty housewife near whose home he happens to be rearing his yearly brood of eaglets. From these destructive propensities we ought, perhaps, to be thankful that the race is not more numerous in our favored land.

“Here, children,” continued Miss Truat, “we must close our bird lessons for the day, but to-morrow—”

Just as the teacher had uttered these words she was startled by a loud outcry in striking imitation of the scream of the eagle about which she had just been talking, followed by a loud stamping as

Dave and Stote suddenly sprang up and went jumping out of the schoolhouse, crying as they passed the door,

“Come on, boys; school is finished!”

Miss Truat was for a moment stunned by the suddenness and rudeness of the outbreak; but controlling herself, she followed them with her eyes to the door, and then turned again to her school to notice the effect on the rest of her pupils; she could not, however, restrain the gush of tears which welled from her eyes. Most of the children seemed quite as much perplexed as their teacher, and many of their eyes were as tearful as her own; but what was peculiarly gratifying to her, not one followed the rebellious pupils. Pausing for a few moments until sufficiently collected, she continued as though nothing had happened:

“To-morrow, children, I will tell you something about vultures, hawks, and owls, which belong to the same general family as the eagles, and will bring two or three specimens of birds to show you, as well as many pictures. Only be good children, and do not be led away by evil counsels, and I will try to make you all happy, for I do love you dearly.”

As soon as the school was dismissed, Jacob Van Gilder walked directly to the teacher, and putting

out his hand, said with frankness and much emotion :

“Miss Truat, I'll have nothing to do wit' those bad boys. I've been in their counsels and have been as wicked as they are, but I'm ashamed of myself, and want to be a good boy and learn, and want you to let me love you.”

Jacob's frankness quite overcame his teacher, and she took his hand and they wept together, while the whole school gathered round in full sympathy. After thus remaining for some time indulging in the melting mood, Jacob turned to his fellow-pupils and said :

“Boys, how many of you will stand by the teacher? As many as will do so hold up the hand.”

In response to this appeal every hand in the school went up. For this expression of support Miss Truat cordially thanked them, but said :

“Dear children, while I am grateful for the expression just given, I shall not ask f'r any support from you except your personal regard. Love is the only force which will be used in my school, and those who cannot be ruled by it must not be of our number. Let us love God and one another, and we shall be happy.”

When Miss Truat wended her way home that night, she was fully relieved from the shock caused

by the afternoon's demonstration, and assured that the crisis of her experiment was safely passed.

As for the disappointed leaders, they were in a pitiable condition. They fully expected that a large majority of the boys would follow them, as they willingly had in former outbreaks. When, therefore, they found themselves standing in the school-yard, with not a single supporter at their back, they were completely dumbfounded. They had failed, and felt that their power was for ever gone; and worse than this, they had forfeited their own self-respect and the confidence of their teacher. They stood for some time in blank amazement, looking foolishly at each other, as though at a loss to comprehend the situation. They at first thought that some attempt would be made to induce them to return to the schoolroom by coaxing or force; but as nothing of the kind occurred, they finally seemed to comprehend that they had made fools of themselves, and sneaked off to their homes, about as chapfallen and unhappy as two lads could well be.



## CHAPTER VII.

### *REPENTANCE AND PROMISES.*

WHEN Miss Truat started for her school on the following morning, her anxiety was not about the probabilities of a general success in her undertaking, but how she could again bring the two recalcitrant pupils under her influence and instruction. Plan after plan had been thought over and abandoned, none seeming to give assurance of a successful issue. It would be useless to report them to the committee, as they had repeatedly expressed their convictions of the hopelessness of the young lads. To seek the interposition of parental authority would only result in rebuke, and to hunt up the delinquents and try to persuade them to return would be equally futile. It seemed a sad alternative to give them up to follow their evil ways to final ruin, but to this painful conclusion the teacher had nearly arrived when reaching the vicinity of the grove in which she had noticed the snowy owl on a former day. Pausing here for a moment, if perchance she



might get another sight of the splendid bird, much to her surprise she encountered her rebellious pupil, David, seated upon a log by the roadside. By his side there was a rudely-constructed cage in which sat staring at her with its great eyes a magnificent live owl similar to the one she had formerly noticed. Approaching near to the boy, she addressed him in a cheerful tone, saying:

“Why, David, is this you? And what a splendid bird you have there!”

Poor David looked very downcast, and his utterance was choking and tremulous as he replied:

“It’s the owl I promised to get you.” Then, pausing for a moment, during which it was seen that a severe internal struggle was going on, he passionately exclaimed: “Oh, Miss Truat, I’m ashamed of what I did yesterday; and if you’ll only forgive me this once, and let me come back to school, I’ll do all I can to please you—I will, indeed I will!”

Miss Truat was fully impressed with the evident sincerity of the penitent, and her warm heart was at once in deep sympathy with her pupil, to whom she cordially responded:

“Oh, David, I felt sure that you would be sorry for your conduct, and I am so glad to find that I was not mistaken in your character; and be assured that I do most cordially and fully forgive you.”

"I am indeed sorry for my bad behavior, and will go right to the school and tell them all so, and then I'm sure I shall feel a great deal better."

"That is a noble resolution, David," said the teacher, "and I honor you for making it, but it is not necessary for you to make such a formal confession of your error. Come with me to the school, and the children will understand that you have repented when they see how ready you are to yield obedience and mark your efforts to learn. So we will forget the past, and see how well we can improve the future opportunities we may have."

"Oh, I'll try with all my might, I will," responded David, with great earnestness; "but I've been a wicked boy so long it'll be mighty hard for me to be good."

"That is true, David, for all our resolutions are but weakness unless we are strengthened by divine aid, and that I hope you may yet learn to seek. If you can do no more to obtain this blessed assistance, I will teach you to say the Lord's prayer; and try and make that part yours where it says, 'Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,' and you will have more strength to resist bad influences and break away from old habits."

"Oh, I'll try mighty hard, Miss Truat. I've often made good resolutions, but they wouldn't last

long, and then I'd give up and say it was no use. But last night, when I felt so bad that I couldn't sleep, I just felt as though I wanted some one to help me to do right, and wondered if the Lord ever did help bad boys like me when they wanted to be good and be somebody."

"Yes, my dear boy, the Lord does surely help all those who sincerely wish to do right and go to him for grace and strength, for he assures us that he is a 'present help in time of trouble.' If you truly seek his aid, your better desires will be realized; and be assured that you shall have my earnest prayers and untiring assistance in all your struggles to reach a higher life."

"Oh, thank you, thank you!" was the grateful response of her pupil. "I begin to feel stronger already."

It would be difficult to tell which was the happier as teacher and pupil stood there by the roadside holding this conversation. One heart was joyfully beating with the pulsations of a new-born purpose to seek a nobler life, while the other was rejoicing that her humble efforts had been blest in awakening this noble aspiration. The teacher felt anew the rich rewards which they are sure to inherit who give even a cup of cold water to a thirsty soul in the name and for the sake of the divine Master. From

the success realized in the case before her, she was led to cherish great hopes of seeing many others of



FIG. 8.—*David's Owl.*

the neglected children of the district rescued from the sad condition in which she had found them.

When the conversation ended which had so hap-

pily restored the relations of the teacher and one of her recreant pupils, Miss Truat turned again to the grave bird, which had been all the while staring at them with its great cat-like eyes (Fig. 8), and asked :

“Why, David, how did you succeed in catching this magnificent bird? It is one of the finest specimens I ever saw, and rarely met with in this part of the country so late in the season of spring.”

“Well, Miss Truat,” was the reply, “you see I couldn’t sleep last night, I felt so bad. I thought you would despise me and the boys would laugh at me, and I just wished I was dead. While I was tumbling about in my bed I heard the owl hooting in the woods close by our house, and it reminded me of my promise to get you the bird, and that made me feel a great deal worse; and then it came to me all at once to just get up and try to catch the owl and send it to you. I don’t know how it was, but just as soon as I had made this resolution I felt a heap better; and then I thought to myself, If I can catch the owl, I will carry it to Miss Truat, and then perhaps she will think better of me, and maybe let me come back to school. Then I felt happier still. Well, I jumped right up and got a little chicken from the coop and went into the bush where I heard the owl, and made a snare and placed the chicken for a bait, for I ’most knowed its cries would



soon bring the big fellow after his breakfast ; and sure enough it did, for I had hardly got away from the snare before I heard the owl flapping his wings and trying to get out of it. I soon fixed up this cage, and here he is. You see, Miss Truat, I haven't ruffled his feathers at all."

"No, indeed," replied the gratified teacher, "and my father will be delighted with the specimen, and will reward you handsomely for it too."

"No, Miss Truat," said David, with great emphasis, "I couldn't take any money for it—that would hurt me more than all ; I'm more than paid now. You see, when I first thought to bring you the bird, it was to keep my promise ; but when I was fetching it here this morning to meet you and tell you how sorry I was for my bad conduct, it somehow seemed as though the owl had something to do with it, and I kept saying, 'Oh, you blessed owl !' I don't just exactly understand it ; but if you don't let me give you the bird, it seems as though I sha'n't be half so strong to do right."

When David had thus opened his heart, Miss Truat comprehended something of the workings of his better nature, which she saw would be strengthened by her cordial acceptance of the proffered gift. She, therefore, said :

"Thank you, David ; I will accept the bird, and



will prize it not only because it is so fine a specimen, but more especially for the frank and generous spirit which has put it into my possession. But," she continued, "it is time for us to be at the schoolhouse, and we will take our prize with us and show him to the scholars."

When the children reached their homes on the day of the rebellion, and spread the intelligence of the outbreak, there were many sage remarks and emphatic head-shakings. "Just as I expected," said one. "I told you so," responded another. "How ridiculous for a conceited little woman to undertake to keep a school which has routed three strong men in one winter!" chimed in the third. "I should think, unless our committee show more sense, we had better get some new ones as soon as possible," was the remark of the small tavernkeeper, the Sir Oracle of the village. As for the feminine gossips, they were exceedingly busy and denunciatory, and left not a rag or tatter of Miss Truat's character which they did not thoroughly pick and hackle. Some went so far as to proclaim her a downright witch, instancing the room full of strange birds, snakes, and other outlandish things which they had seen at her father's house, in which they affirmed she spent all her time. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that many of the families were

so convinced that the new teacher was a failure, if nothing worse, as to consider it hardly necessary to send their children to school on the following day; and, indeed, there would have been an exceedingly small attendance had not the children themselves manifested a strong desire to be present, led there, most of them, by the spell of Miss Truat's kindness, mingled, perhaps, with a touch of curiosity to see what would be the results of the next day's session.

The interview by the roadside had detained Miss Truat somewhat beyond the time of opening; hence, when she approached the schoolhouse, most of the children had already arrived and were waiting, somewhat puzzled at her delay. Some were even beginning to think that the demonstration of the day before had really frightened her away. When, therefore, they saw her and David coming up the lane pleasantly conversing together, the latter lugging his captive owl, their wonder knew no bounds, and they were quite at a loss to understand the situation; and well they might be—the rude assailant of yesterday transformed into the confidential friend of to-day. And then, coming with such a companion! It is not strange, taking into the account the training which many of the children had undergone from ignorant and superstitious parents, whose imputations of witchcraft they had just been listening to,

that many curious eyes were cast at the owl in the box, and that he was regarded somewhat in the light of the witch that had brought to pass the wonderful reconciliation which they were now witnessing. So strongly did this impression take hold of some of the children that they were on the point of taking a speedy leave for home, and were only prevented by the cheerful voice of the teacher as she greeted them most cordially, and said :

“I am sorry, children, that I am somewhat late this morning, so we must get at once at our lessons. I will try and be prompt hereafter.”

Noticing the many curious glances cast at the noble bird in David's hands, she smilingly remarked :

“You see David and I have brought a new scholar this morning, to whom I will introduce you by and by. He is not half so wise as he looks, and would, no doubt, much rather try his beak on our fingers than learn his A B C; but I trust we shall find him a most interesting acquaintance before we have done with him. David may place him here on my table until we have time to give him more particular attention.”

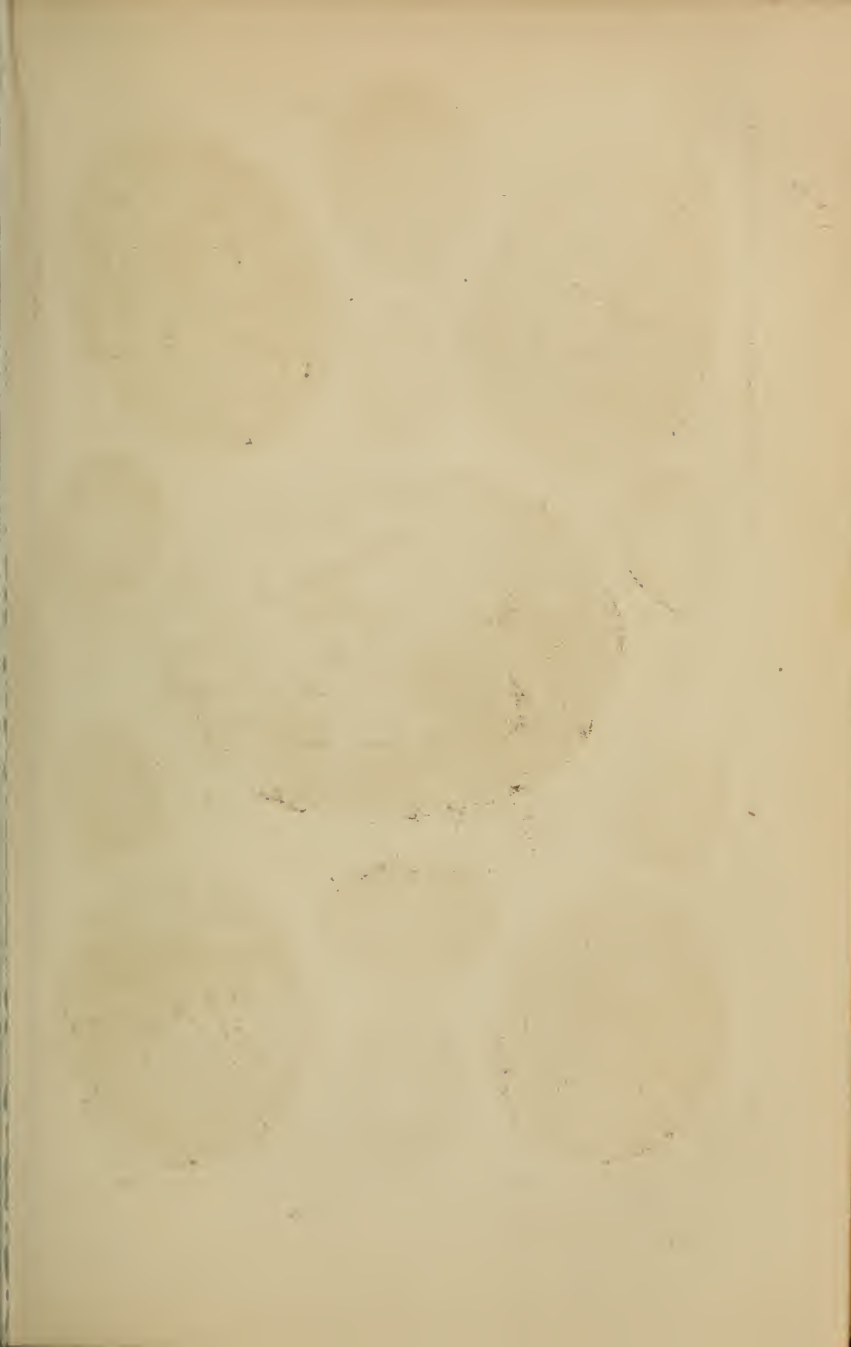
This proceeding of the teacher did not seem to lessen the wonder of the school, nor abate the superstitious awe of the few who regarded the whole as a kind of wizard incantation. This feeling was not a

little increased when they witnessed the ready obedience of David as he placed the bird where directed, then took his usual place with his face quite free from its accustomed cunning and determined look. Surely nothing but witchcraft could produce such a change as this.

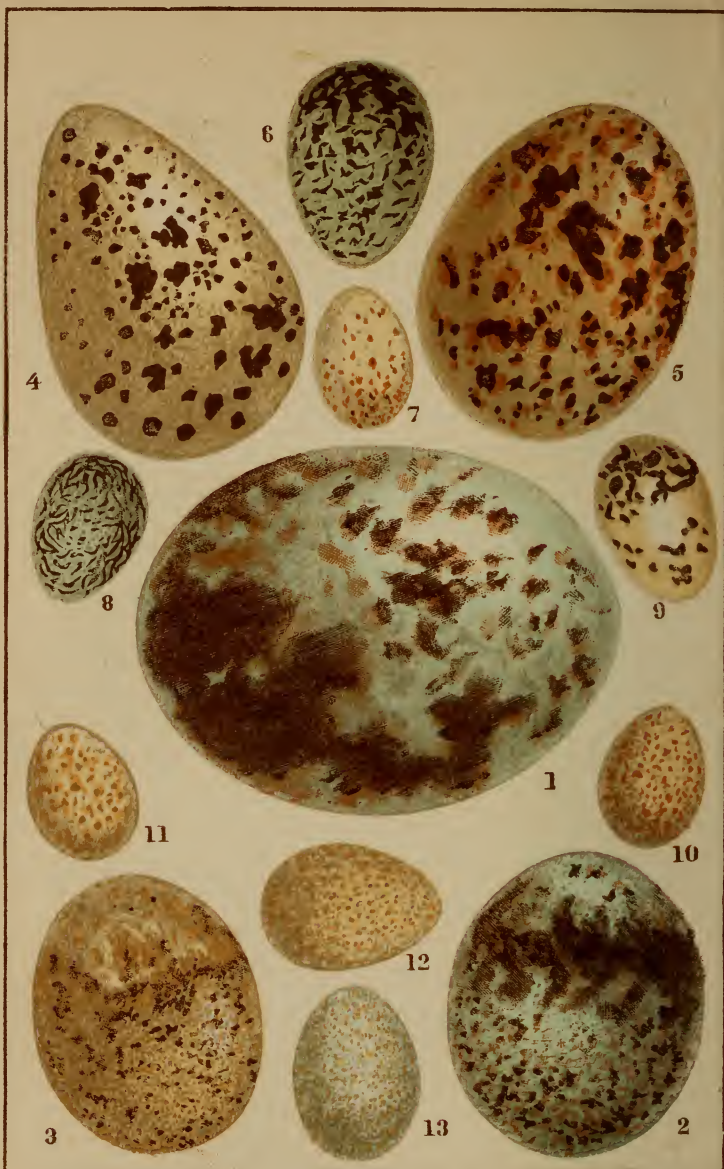
In calling the morning roll Miss Truat did not fail to notice the absence of young Chivers, but thought best to make no inquiries respecting him. Being now left alone, if he was yet determined to continue in his perverse ways, she felt assured that she would have little to fear from his influence; though it was her earnest hope and prayer that he too might follow David in the safer and happier way of repentance and reformation.

The fact was that Staughton had gone home quite as unhappy and crestfallen as David. Being of a more sensitive nature, his first strong feelings were those of chagrin and shame at his failure and sure disgrace among his companions. Then came an overwhelming sense of his wickedness and unkindness toward his teacher, who had so evidently been trying to instruct and make him happy. The more he reviewed his conduct, the more aggravated his guilt appeared. In this unhappy mood he passed a sleepless night; and when morning came, as is often the case with such natures, instead of being led to

a heart-melting repentance, like his associate, he was treading on the borders of a crushing despair. Instead, therefore, of turning his steps toward the school to seek a reinstatement, he wandered off to the bank of the river with a half determination to run away to New York and go to sea, where he would never be heard of again. But when the time for final decision came, the thoughts of his poor widowed mother left in her loneliness kept him back from the fulfillment of his rash purpose, and he turned away from the landing to go he knew not where, to do he knew not what. In this frame of mind he wandered listlessly about until near the middle of the afternoon, when, finding himself near the residence of Doctor Truat, he determined to go in, acknowledge his wrong-doing, and seek the doctor's mediation in securing a readmission to the school. He was perhaps aided in reaching this conclusion by learning during the day that his companion in evil, much to his surprise, had been seen entering the schoolhouse on most confidential terms with the teacher. Surely, he thought, if David has found forgiveness, I may hope to be restored to favor—a hope well founded, the reader will at once surmise, as he will see how it was realized farther on.







1. Red-shouldered Hawk.
2. Sharp-shinned Hawk.
3. Sparrow Hawk.
4. Upland Plover.
5. Canadian Grouse.
6. Red Crossbill.
7. Blue-winged Yellow Warbler.

8. Tree Sparrow.
9. Orchard Oriole.
10. Black-throated Green Warbler.
11. Red-bellied Nuthatch.
12. White-bellied Nuthatch.
13. Snow-bird.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### VULTURES, HAWKS, AND OWLS.

WHEN the proper hour arrived in the afternoon, Miss Truat opened her portfolio, and taking from it some exceedingly well-executed water-color drawings of the vulture tribe, said :

“Dear children, according to my promise I will now tell you something more about the robber birds, and will begin with the largest of the class, and here is his picture, the famous *Lammergeyer* of the Alps. This painting I made from a magnificent specimen killed by an Alpine hunter when making a journey through Switzerland with my father. He was found far up the mountains, where he had his nest, and had proved very annoying to the farmers in the neighborhood, on whose flocks he had made occasional depredations. He was so fine a bird that I not only painted his likeness, but also preserved him, and you can see him natural as life when you visit my father’s collection of birds. And here,” said the teacher, at the same time showing a likeness of the South American condor, “is the equal of the mon-

arch bird of the Alps, the huge *Condor* of the Andes in South America. You will see that they are nearly equal in size, and their immense strength does not greatly differ, though in this respect the palm is generally given to the American bird. You will notice, however, that they are quite unlike in many respects. The condor has a soft downy collar of white around his neck and a large warty crest on his head somewhat like the wattles of a turkey. The lammergeyer is destitute of these appendages, but instead has a tuft of bristle-like hairs growing near the nostrils; hence he is often called the bearded vulture. The general color of both of these birds is grayish brown, varying in depth of shade at different periods of the bird's life, the condor being characterized by a white stripe down the centre of each quill. These birds are of immense size, their spread of wings ranging from ten to fifteen feet, with a corresponding strength, enabling them to carry off animals of great size, as they can pick up a goat or a sheep with the greatest ease and carry it to their mountain eyrie. In habits they are much alike, choosing their homes on the highest peaks of the grand mountains where they are found. Like the race to which they belong, they feed by preference on whatever carrion may come in their way. This trait of character places them lower in the scale than

the eagles which we were talking about yesterday; for though the eagle is so much inferior in size and strength, he disdains to feast on a festering carcass or that which another has killed. His appetite is too dainty, and he turns away from everything that is not fresh and savory. He is independent, and active in supplying his own wants and those of his family of eaglets. But the whole race of vultures are indolent and disgusting in their habits. They sit dozing on some mountain crag or old tree until they catch the scent of some decaying carcass, and then they sail off lazily to their loathsome feast, gorging themselves to such repletion on the putrid diet as to be an easy prey to the watchful hunter, who perhaps provided the supper expressly to take advantage of the vulture's gluttony and make him a captive. The distance at which these birds can smell carrion is truly wonderful. Look at this large nasal opening, and we can see that God has provided the vulture with an organ just adapted to his habits. In our country we have a representative of the family in the well-known turkey-buzzard, often seen in our fields feasting on dead animals, but which swarm in the South in their fields, towns, and cities, where they are carefully protected as most useful scavengers. I have often watched these birds, and have been astonished to see how quickly



they will appear when a dead animal is left on the field. Before the carrion was exposed not a buzzard could be seen, though the range of vision might be the utmost limits of the eye, but it would hardly be left before afar off, like a black speck in the heavens, the hungry birds would be seen coming from every direction to the banquet. The distances from whence they came seemed absolutely too remote for the scent to have reached them so speedily. But travelers in the great deserts of Africa give still more wonderful statements of the acute sense of smell in these birds. Many of these sandy wastes are hundreds of miles in extent, where not a tree or blade of grass exists to attract bird or beast. But let some poor horse or camel drop under his burden, overcome by heat and thirst, and it will be but an hour or two before flocks of buzzards will be tearing at the spoil. Whence do they come, and by whose guidance do they so surely find out the prey? How the sharpness of their senses mocks the slow and dull attributes of man! It is plain that God has bestowed on these ugly birds two of the senses in a degree so sharp that our gifts of smelling and sight are hardly worthy of a comparison. Two such wonderful faculties are enough to lift them from the low scale in which they would otherwise be placed.

“But besides these redeeming traits, disgusting as

the buzzard is in habits and repulsive to sight when seeking his favorite repast, he is not unattractive as he sails and circles around the field where it lies, each circle growing smaller until the bird has hit the centre where the animal is found.

“You have all seen turkey-buzzards, so I need not describe them to you further than to say that they make their nests on the ground under old logs, heaps of brush, or whatever may afford shelter and partial concealment. They lay two or three eggs of a creamy white, blotched and speckled, and a little less in size than the common turkey’s egg.

“Our common turkey-buzzard is generally considered about the lowest and most vulgar member of the vulture family, but to save the reputation of our country there is a species in California which is not an unworthy competitor of the giant birds of the Alps and Andes. In size and strength he is nearly equal to these foreigners, and he has similar habits. His peculiarity is a nearly featherless neck, covered with a somewhat wattled skin, spotted with orange and red, giving the bird a singular appearance. His home, like that of his compeers, is among the peaks of the Rocky Mountains.

“While dead animals are the chosen food of the vulture tribes, they will nevertheless, when pressed by protracted fasting, become fierce and active, and



seize upon any stray animal which may come in their way, and have been known, like the eagles, to pounce

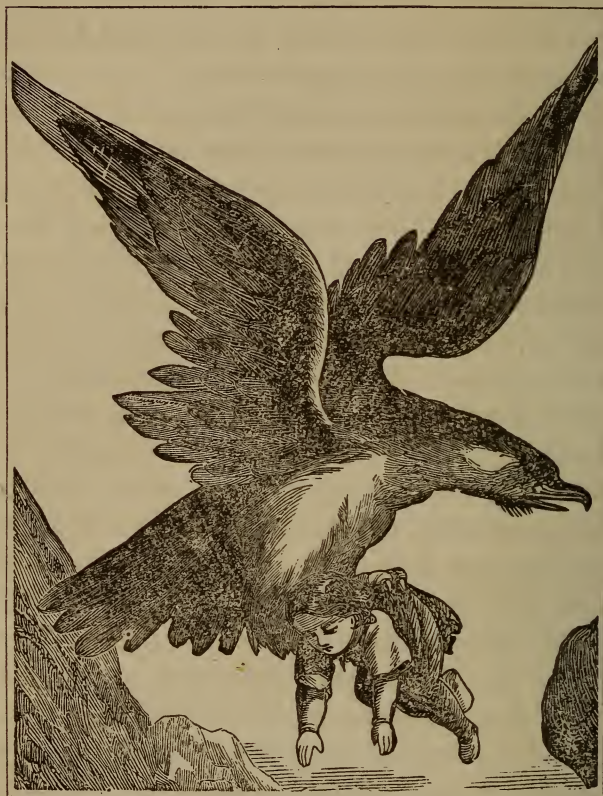


FIG. 9.—*Bearded Vulture Carrying off a Child.*

upon small children. I read of such an event occurring in Switzerland some years ago ; and as I visited

the scene of the disaster and learned the facts from those who were witnesses of the tragedy, I made a sketch of the scene, and here it is. (Fig. 9.)

"The poor little victim of this bold robber was a little girl named Anna Zarbuchen. She was playing before the door of her father's cottage when a large bearded vulture made a swoop, seized the child by its back, and carried it off to a crag of the mountains, where it was torn to pieces and fed to the young vultures. A few months afterward some hunters found the bloody and torn clothes of the little Anna, and bore them to the stricken parents as sad mementoes of their lost darling.

"From the facts we have learned we see that the vultures have but few qualities to recommend them to favor; hence we may be rather thankful than otherwise that we have so few of them among our birds, and that those we have are of the more useful kind."

Putting up her sketches of the vultures, Miss Truat drew from her collection a number of the falcon or hawk species, and then resumed her remarks:

"Here, children, are some of the rapacious birds with which you are well acquainted, as we have many of them constantly in our fields and woods. They are variously known under the names of fal-

cons, kites, and hawks, the last being the name by which we generally designate them. All together, there are several hundred varieties known in different parts of the world, most of which I have seen as I visited the Old World with my father. They are perhaps as widely distributed as any other of the feathered tribes, no nation being without some representative of the family. Their instincts and



FIG. 10.—*Sparrow-Hawk.*

habits are much the same as those possessed by the eagles. They avoid the loathsome diet of the vultures, always preferring a fresh victim of their own killing. Of course the animals they prey upon are proportioned to the size of the captor, and this fact gives a name to several varieties—fish-hawk, duck-hawk, hen-hawk, pigeon-hawk, and sparrow-hawk.

Here is a beautiful specimen of the last-named bird, being a little less in size than the wild pigeon. (Fig. 10.) He is sometimes too lazy to build his own nest, and so takes possession of that of the crow, in which are deposited four creamy-white eggs, beautifully speckled and blotched. (Plate II., Fig. 3.)

“Pretty as the sparrow-hawk is, he makes sad havoc with the little birds, for which we can hardly pardon him, though he does now and then capture a vagrant mouse or mole. If hungry, and no better game can be secured, he makes a less dainty meal on beetles, grasshoppers, or crickets. This hawk is quite tame, visiting the garden and barn-yard, where he will often sit perched on a stake or corner, watching for his prey, making a very attractive sight. It has often been domesticated, and is capable of being taught many curious tricks, and to capture small birds, after the manner of the hunting falcons, once so commonly used in the old country by the lovers of field sports. The jerfalcon and peregrine falcon were the species most celebrated for hunting purposes, both for their speed of wing and their courage. They are both splendid birds, the first being marked very much like David’s snowy owl, the plumage a handsome blending of black and white. This bird was very much sought after by the nobility of Europe, and almost fabulous prices



paid for a well-trained specimen. This fact led to a class of men who devoted their time to the training and government of these birds, who found it no unprofitable business. The task was slow and laborious, requiring a constant resort to the fields, and to the experience of many bitter disappointments, from the disposition of the falcons to return to their native freedom when once loosened from the hands of their trainers. The game for whose capture they were used, included the various classes of water-fowls, herons, and the hares and rabbits on the moors.

"The jerfalcons are found in all northern latitudes, and visit our locality only during the winter season, and then only in small numbers; hence they are seldom seen. The peregrine falcon is more common, and yet not so plenty as to make him very familiar. I have brought fine drawings of each of these birds; and if you will examine them closely, you will easily recognize any of the living species when you see them.

"But can any of you tell me what kind of a bird this is?" said the teacher as she held forth a fine specimen of the red-tailed hawk.

"A hen-hawk," shouted a number of the scholars.

"Yes, children, that is the name by which he is most commonly known among us, and certainly most



worthily bestowed, for he makes quite too frequent visits to our poultry-yards. Nevertheless, he is a very handsome bird, and makes a pretty picture when sailing over head or perched on the limb of some dead tree watching for his dinner. This kind of hawk remains with us the year round, and boldly makes his presence known by a frequent repetition of his sharp *kae, kae, kae!* which is sure to call forth the warning note of the ever-watchful guardian of the chicken-yard, at which the whole brood take refuge under the nearest shed or hiding place.

"The *Sharp-shinned* hawk is not so large nor so destructive as the hen-hawk, though now and then levying a tax of a chicken or two. These birds, like most of the hawk tribes, build their nests in the tops of tall trees, mostly using for the purpose sticks and coarse weeds, with a little grass for a lining. The eggs are mostly laid in pairs, and are nearly spherical, of a bluish white, more or less blotched and speckled with brown. Here are fine specimens of their eggs, and they are very pretty indeed. (Plate II., Figs. 1, 2.) The hen-hawk's egg is much the largest, but in shape and coloring they are quite alike. Perhaps we may be able before the season closes to get a fresh specimen or two to add to our school cabinet.

"All along our sea-shore the beautiful *Fish-hawk*

is found, and so perfectly harmless that he is carefully protected by the inhabitants. He makes no demands on the chicken-yard or duck-pond, but lives entirely on the fish, which he captures with great skill. His nests can be seen all along the coasts of New Jersey and Maryland. They are large, and built of sticks in the tops of old trees, but often quite near the ground. Indeed, if a shore farmer wants a brood on his lands, he has only to set up a platform of a few old rails, and in a short time a pair of birds will take possession and occupy it for years, seeming to understand that it was intended for their use. These handsome and harmless birds are never killed or disturbed except by the cruel and thoughtless.

“But, children, I will now show you one of the strangest birds of my collection, usually classed among the falcons, but having such distinct characteristics as should entitle him to a family distinction. Here he is, with a great snake in his mouth. He is called the *Secretary Bird* because of the long feathers on the back of his head, as though, like a clerk, he had stuck them there while attending to some other matters. (Fig. 11.)

“This strange bird is a native of Southern Africa, a region infested with snakes, many of them of the most venomous kind, and God seems to have pro-

vided this strange creature to lessen the danger of their presence, for he lives almost exclusively on



FIG. 11.—*The Secretary Bird.*

them. Nor is he at all dainty as to the species ; venomous or harmless, they are alike acceptable to his appetite. For this useful habit the secretary bird

is highly prized, as the buzzard is with us, by the Dutch colonists of the Cape of Good Hope. They often capture them when young, and rear them around their houses and barns as protectors against venomous serpents, lizards, rats, and other vermin, which they destroy in immense numbers.

“When in South Africa, myself and father witnessed a very curious combat between the secretary bird and a large snake of the most poisonous kind. We were making some explorations one day near the base of a mountain range, when our attention was attracted by a large bird in the distance making the most strange antics. It would make quick jumps into the air, bend and bow, stretch out its long wings, and step quickly around a small circle in the most energetic manner. We were so interested that we made our way cautiously toward the place, and were enabled to approach very near to the scene, as the bird was so much engaged as to pay no attention to us. When near enough, we at once recognized the bird as the secretary, and saw that he was waging a fierce warfare with his dreadful foe, which seemed to be equally in earnest and intent on victory. The serpent stood at bay, with its head swollen with rage and mouth wide open, the poisonous fangs ready to do their fatal work. But the bird too well understood the character of the foe he was contending



with to give him any fatal advantage. With one of its large strong wings spread before it as a shield, presenting only its bloodless feathers to receive the fangs of the serpent, the bird kept up its jumps and circling movements until a favorable moment; then, with a sudden dash of its strong wing, it struck the snake to the earth, and before it could recover pounced upon it with beak and claws, giving it fearful wounds. This was done repeatedly, and each time the secretary would leap from its foe before it had sufficiently recovered to coil around it and inflict the fatal bite. By these repeated onslaughts the serpent was finally overcome and devoured. Here you see in the picture the victor with his victim hanging lifeless in his beak. How useful these birds are may be learned from the statement of a naturalist who carefully examined the stomach of a secretary bird, in which he found three snakes as long as his arm, eleven lizards, eleven small turtles, besides numberless locusts, grasshoppers, beetles, and insects. Knowing these facts, it may be regretted that so valuable a bird cannot be naturalized in our country, where he would no doubt be very useful in ridding us of some of our annoyances.

“But we must leave this class of birds and pay a little attention to David’s owl, which we have kept a long time waiting for his introduction to you.



“The birds we have been talking about this afternoon are called *diurnal*, because they have sharp eyes and seek their food wholly in the daytime; but those we shall further examine to-day are designated as *nocturnal birds*, because they employ the night for their depredations, for which purpose they have eyes especially adapted. Look at this fine bird which David captured last night in the grove near his home. You will notice that his eyes are large and round, like a cat’s eyes, and, like pussy, he has the power of contracting the pupil of the eye, so as to take in more or less light to suit his purpose. This is the case with all the owl family. With the exception of the snowy owl and the hawk owl, who do go abroad in the daytime, though preferring the night season, the owls are nocturnal birds, shunning the light as though it were painful to them. If their eyes are examined when the light is strong, the pupil will be found nearly covered, only a little black perpendicular line indicating its existence. If we now wrap a white sheet around our shoulders, we can approach so near as to grasp them with the hand, in which manner I once captured a fine specimen of the barn owl. These birds, though not so plenty in our neighborhood, are widely scattered over the country, and are among the tamest of the race. They delight in living around barns or old





deserted buildings, where they build their nests in any convenient hole or crevice, and lay from two to three eggs of a nearly white cast, and oftentimes of a singularly rough surface. (Fig. 12.)

“When hatched out, the young owlets are exceedingly odd-looking little fellows, peeping out of the nests at any disturbance with a wise and comical expression. Here is a picture of three little fellows, as I once saw them peeping from their nest in an old sycamore.” (Fig. 13.)

The children were much amused at these pictures, greeting the last with a hearty laugh, which the teacher did not seek to repress, and which



FIG. 13.—*Young Owlets.*

quite as much surprised the scholars as did the birds. Such outbreaks had uniformly been visited with sharp rebukes and severe punishments, and they now wondered that under any circumstances they could be allowed to laugh right out in school. But the indulgence only served to endear the teacher to their hearts and convince them that school could be a happy place.



"The *Snowy Owl* and the *Barn Owl* are much alike in marking and color of feathers," resumed the teacher. "The noble bird which David has captured and most kindly presented to me is mostly found in the colder regions of the North, and only visits us a short time during the winter, very seldom remaining so late in the season as this one has done. Notice how soft and downy his feathers are, extending more to the wings than any other of the rapacious birds. This provision enables the owl to make a soft and noiseless flight, and thus the more readily to approach his sleeping prey, which would be awakened if his wing had the sharp whirr of the harder and more rapid wings of the eagle and the hawk.

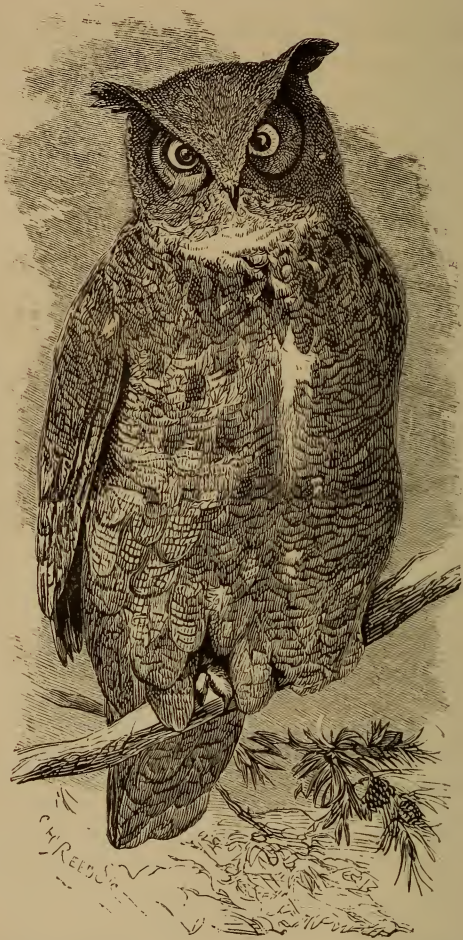
"But now I have been talking a long while, and would like to know if any of my scholars can name any owls which I have not mentioned; if so, speak right out and give their names."

This appeal pleased the children very much, and they were not slow in responding; so one cried out, "Hoot owl;" another, "Screech owl;" and still a third, "Big-eared owl."

"That is very good, indeed," responded the teacher; "you know something about birds as well as I do, and here are pictures of the birds you have named. These birds are often found in our woods,







where the *Great Owl* makes himself known by his loud and well-known cry, which, heard in a still night when passing alone through the woods, may well be a little startling: *Ca-hoo! Ca-hoo! Ca-hoo-o-ooo!* The little *Screech Owl*, the smallest of the family, is a noisy denizen of our woods, whose tremulous and protracted cry is often heard around our houses at night, and is not at all conducive to sleep nor quite so harmonious as to make us wish for its long continuance. The *Long-eared Owl* is more rare, but still quite common, and a splendid bird, as are several others found in various parts of our country, and which we have not time to particularly describe; so I will close our afternoon's talk by telling you of a fright I once had in an Arkansas canebrake. (Fig. 14.)

“Passing one spring through that state when the waters had overflowed the banks of the river and spread out many miles, we were compelled to spend the night encamped on a small mound in one of its immense canebrakes. We found a large dry cottonwood tree which had fallen, and soon had a blazing fire to camp by. Not being used to such rough lodgings, the circumstances made me feel a little nervous and timid; but being weary, I was soon in a sound sleep. How long I remained thus I do not remember, but I was aroused and startled by the

most hideous combination of screams and hoots, near and far, that I ever listened to. I imagined that I heard cries of distress, shrieks of murder, shouts of battle, groans and hisses, until, in a perfect tremor of terror, I rushed to my father's side, and alarmed him by the rudeness with which I clung to him. After being awakened and listening for a short time, he said :

“ ‘Why, my daughter, were you born in the woods to be scared by a concert of owls?’ ”

“ It seems that the light of our fire had attracted the whole generation of owls, big and little, and they were filling the tops of the canes and the few trees that stood on the mound, and were giving us the full benefit of their musical powers. So you see, children, I am not the bravest woman in the world, for I really was terribly scared at an owl. ”

“ But now, trusting that you have enjoyed the day as much as I have, we will say good-bye, and then let us all try and carry our happiness home with us ; be happy and make happy are the great lessons of life.”

## CHAPTER IX.

### *MISS YOST LOOKING AFTER THE WITCHES.*

THE gossip and surmises which the outbreak at the school had caused were as nothing in comparison to the excitement raised in the district when the children reported the proceedings of the day, described in the last chapter. So generally had the conclusion been reached that the young Arabs were again triumphant and the new teacher a failure that the busybodies were wholly unprepared for the strange and unexpected turn which another day had brought forth. The defiant rebel of one day the confidential pupil of the next! The scholar that most rudely trampled on authority changed to the most obedient one in school, and that without any apparent cause for the wonderful transition! Dave Overocker and Miss Truat going to school together carrying a big owl between them!

"If that isn't witchcraft," said Achsa Yost, "then I don't know beans when the bag is untied; and it just proves what I told the squire when I gave him a piece of my mind for bringing that saucy, stuck-up minx into our district."



Miss Yost, as she was still called by courtesy, was an ancient maiden, living in the neighborhood, who, having no particular business of her own, made herself exceedingly busy with the affairs of her neighbors. A kind of human telegraph, only on a more liberal scale, dispatching the gossip with a restless activity fully compensated if she could only be the first to give it color and currency, Miss Yost was one of the most diligent of newsvenders, as she was one of the most ignorant and superstitious. She had plied her vocation so long in the neighborhood that the time of her advent had almost faded from the mind of the oldest inhabitant. But it is best to let her have her say, and so we will listen to her budget as she dispenses her store, seated in a circle of congenial listeners :

“Yes, indeed, I did ; I spoke my mind right out, and I think it is high time, with sich wicked doings on hand. Why, I just knew what that wicked hussy was going to do, for you must know that I passed by old Doctor Truat’s the other day, and thinks I, I’ll just peep in and see what I can see. And what do you suppose I found out ? Why, none on you could guess in a thousand times, and so I’ll tell you : in a room full of great big awful-looking beasts, birds, and snakes was that Miss Truat right on her knees praying to an awful-looking bird with a bill

big enough to swallow you. There she was stroking its nasty feathers just as you would a cat's back. 'Ah,' said I, 'there's mischief brewing; the broomsticks'll be flying through the air to-night, and plenty of sour milk in the morning.' Well, I went right off and told Melissa Van Blaricum, didn't I, Melissa?" said Miss Yost, appealing to this buxom lady, who happened to be present, and who was prompt to confirm the statement.

"No, no!" emphatically responded Miss Yost, when one suggested that Miss Truat was probably only adjusting some of her specimens of birds; "she was right down on her knees, true in earnest, selling herself to the evil one. I felt sure something would happen; and to be downright certain, that night I turned my tea-grounds in my cup, and what do you think I saw? Why, just as plain as you are setting there, up turns a real witch and a great big owl staring right at me. And now you'll b'lieve I'm right, for Sarah Schoonmaker saw Dave Overocker, who went stomping out'n school only yesterday, and Miss Truat lugging that owl to school this morning; and so I watched them, and saw them carrying it home this afternoon. Now, I'm not going to allow any sich doings, and so my duty is plain. I shall just go right over to Betsey Overocker and tell her, if she don't want her son clean bewitched by the evil one,

she'd better take him out'n that bedlam woman's hands pesky soon."

"Indeed, so I say," added Miss Van Blaricum; "and I can tell you more: our old black cat mewed three times last night and looked right straight up the chimney. I told mother something was in the wind, and soon as I had said that a great owl hooted three times in the woods close by our house, and Neighbor Smith's old dog gave a terrible long howl, and 'tain't in reason that all these signs should happen without meaning something."

"Now, just listen to that," said Miss Yost, with an emphasis; "I guess we can tell how Dave Overocker is changed so mighty quick, and so I'd better be about my business, or he'll be clean given to the old Scratch."

Intent on her mission, Miss Yost sought the home of David, where she found him and his mother, to whom he had just been giving the incidents already set before the reader, and they were rejoicing together over the good resolutions which the son had made.

"Well, Mrs. Overocker," began the visitor, "I've come on an errand of mercy and kindness, and I'm glad that you and David are together."

"I'm sure we are both much obliged," responded the mother.

"Nothing but duty to our feller-creters," continued Miss Yost, "would tempt me to meddle with the affairs of my neighbors; but you see I can't see your son quite ruined and not faithfully give you warning."

"I'm very sorry," said Mrs. Overocker, "that my son has been so rude and vicious; but I hope he has been led to reflection and repentance, and is determined to do better hereafter, and I trust those whom he has offended will kindly overlook his past conduct."

"Ah, Betsey," continued the busybody, "that's just where the danger lies. He's bewitched by that hussy of a teacher, and you don't know it. Why, don't you know that she is a witch and deals with the old Scratch in the shape of a great big owl? If you don't, it's time you had your eyes open, for it's just as true as preaching. Oh, I shudder when I think of it; but this very day your son carried that terrible owl to school, and I guess he'd a-dropped it mighty quick if he'd a-knowed just what he was carrying."

When Miss Yost had ended her alarming statement, David, though a believer in ghosts and witches, could not resist the impulse to burst into a most hearty laugh at the absurdities of the intermeddler, which only served to render the credulous woman

more earnest in her warnings of impending danger. She, being all the while ignorant of the manner of the owl's capture and of David's part in the transactions to which she had referred, could only regard his conduct as strong confirmation of his being bewitched, while to him her conduct was the most absurd, amounting almost to proof that she must at least be half crazy:

"There, Mrs. Overocker!" she exclaimed; "don't you see how powerful the spell is? Did David ever act so audaciously before as to laugh right in my face when I was a-talking to you? You may depend on't, Miss Truat has got him right in her clutches; and if you don't break the spell pretty soon, he's a poor lost boy, that's all I've got to say, and my skirts is clean of his gore. If you'll take my advice—and I don't ask you nothing for't, either—you'll make him say the Lord's Prayer three times and put a Bible under his head, and that, I guess, will make Miss Truat mount her broomstick and scud to hum with her ugly owl."

David's mother was fully indoctrinated with the superstitions of the day and region where she lived; but having a full understanding of the facts which had been so absurdly perverted by her visitor, she could hardly resist joining in the laugh with her son, nor did she fail to see the ignorance and meddlesome



character of her would-be adviser; but restraining her merriment, she said:

"Well, I think it is true that the new teacher has bewitched my son in some way."

"Oh, I'm glad you know it," quickly responded the gossip; "I thought you couldn't be so blinded; and so, I suppose, I needn't trouble myself any further in your affairs, for you'll not let David go to that witch's den any more, of course?"

"Oh, certainly I shall," replied Mrs. Overocker, "for her influence over my son is so gratifying that I should be exceedingly sorry to have the spell broken."

At this quite unexpected statement the little yellow-gray eyes of Miss Yost opened to an unusual degree, and with raised hands and wonder-bespeaking countenance she exclaimed:

"Why, Betsey Overocker, you must be clean bewitched yourself, or you wouldn't give your only son to Satan in spite of such plain warning."

At this juncture David thought it time to set matters right in the mind of Miss Yost; so addressing her, he said:

"Yes, I am under the spell of the new teacher, and hope to remain so until I'm wiser and better, which will be the only results of her bewitching; and to let you see, Miss Yost, how mistaken you

are about her character, let me tell you that I snared the owl last night which you are so alarmed about, and gave it to her this morning when I went to ask her to forgive me for my rudeness. She loves birds, and has spent her life in studying their habits and painting their likenesses, and is going to tell us about them, and the children are all delighted with her. She's no more of a witch than you are, and so you need not be alarmed for my safety, if her influence is the only danger I'm exposed to."

When David had finished his statements, Miss Yost began to realize that she had started on a wrong scent this time, but the shock was a sudden one, and it was a most reluctant yielding for her to give up the conviction that Miss Truat belonged to the sisterhood of witches. It brought her mission to a sudden close, and she returned rather crestfallen at losing so rich a theme for her meddlesome tongue. It had one good effect, however: it kept her for a few days from plying her vocation, as even her fertile mind could invent no explanation for so palpable a case of misconception and detraction.

But let us return to the teacher and her proceedings after the close of her school.

When she and David entered the gate of her home and met her father, who had been awaiting her coming with some anxiety, he was not a little

surprised at her company, and exclaimed, wonderingly:

"Why, my daughter, I thought I had a great surprise in store for you, but I think you have one yet more astonishing for me. Is not this the young lad that you told me so rudely interrupted your school yesterday?"

"Yes, father, the same, but it gives me great pleasure to say that he has frankly confessed his wrong and promises now to be one of my best scholars; and see what a splendid peace-offering he has brought me! Is it not the finest snowy owl you ever saw? We have had him at school to-day, and have made good use of him, and now David insists that I shall keep him as a memento of his determination to do right and my full forgiveness of his error."

"Ah!" replied the father; "I am very glad to hear your statement, and most cordially add my thanks for his kindness to you and for the possession of so rare a bird; and be assured, my boy," said the doctor, turning to David, "that it will ever afford me the greatest pleasure to aid my daughter in any of her efforts for your improvement and welfare. Do not hesitate to come to me for assistance and counsel whenever you may stand in need of either."

Thanking the doctor for his kind interest and offers, David passed out of the gate, feeling a happiness

beyond all former experiences, and with a new accession of strength to help him on in the newly-chosen way.

When David had departed, Miss Truat turned to her father and asked what good news he had in store to surprise her with.

"Why, first," he replied, "our friend, poor Jim, has been with me nearly all day, and I have given his case a careful examination, the result of which strongly confirms me in my hopes of greatly mitigating his infirmity. In the mean time, I have been giving him a few lessons in manners, trying to correct his awkward see-sawing and disposition to thrust out his arm, in which I have succeeded above my expectations. He already seems to comprehend what is intended, and with perseverance I am certain these habits can be reformed. We must see if we cannot induce him also to cease his unmeaning sing-song, or at least give it a more musical and sensible pitch. I have already discovered that he is peculiarly susceptible to kind treatment, of which he evidently has but little experience, and will do anything for those who thus manifest an interest in him. In return for the small favors I have bestowed, he has been vigorously splitting wood all the afternoon, and is now busy cleaning out the stable. In these matters he has shown such capacity for

usefulness as to induce me to solicit the consent of his parents to let him remain with us, as affording both you and me better opportunities to advance his cure and improvement, feeling assured that he can do quite enough to compensate for any charges we may incur. If you approve my plan, we will ride over to the swamp this evening, and see what his parents will say to our proposal."

"Why, father," replied the daughter, "I am very much pleased with your proposition, and will enter into your plans most heartily. It will be a blessed success if we can do no more than mitigate the condition of the poor unfortunate."

Just as the daughter finished her sentence, Jim came from the barn, and as soon as he noticed Miss Truat he began his usual see-saw motion, which the doctor immediately arrested by taking Jim by the shoulder and then straightening himself up. The poor simpleton seemed at once to comprehend, for with a jerk he stood at his full height, at the same time saying:

"Jim knows."

Miss Truat greeted him most cordially, and then he was dismissed to his home with a good supply of provisions for himself and his parents. When Jim had departed, the doctor said:

"But, my daughter, I have not given you the par-



ticular incident that I supposed would cause you most surprise. I have had another visitor to-day, who came to secure my special services to obtain your favorable consideration."

"Well, father, you certainly do surprise me that any one should so highly esteem any consideration of mine, and I am anxious to learn to whom I can be so serviceable."

"He told me," replied the doctor, "that his name was Staughton Chivers, and that he was one of the pupils who were guilty of disorder yesterday. He seemed very sorry for his wrong-doing, and promises, if you will allow him to return to school, to be obedient and try earnestly to profit by your instructions. I was much interested in the lad, and told him that he might return to school to-morrow, as I felt sure that you would most cordially restore him to favor. So, you see, I am interested in the case, as my reputation for parental influence is at stake."

"Dear father, your information is truly a most agreeable surprise. The only drawback to this day's experience was the thought that this lad might not be led, like David, who has just left us, to see his error, and I have been considering what plan would be most likely to secure such a happy result. Being thus unexpectedly and happily relieved from my anxiety, I shall most gladly redeem all your pledges

of restored favor; and now it occurs to me that, as his home is in the way to Jim's cabin, we may call on his mother, who is the widow of a pensioner, and relieve him from any embarrassment by giving him assurance of our happiness at his resolve to enter upon a better course of life."

"Very well, my daughter; after tea we will take the pony and make our calls."

It is only necessary to add that these visits resulted most satisfactorily. Staughton was restored to the school and arrangements were made for poor Jim to become an inmate of Doctor Truat's family.

Thus in one week the Arab district had been brought under a control unknown for years, and Miss Truat assured that her attempts to accomplish the task would not be an addition to the failures of the past. With her the only questions now were how best to improve the advantages which had been already gained and secure a yet stronger hold of the affections and attention of her pupils. As the use of her knowledge of birds had resulted so happily, she resolved to continue to employ her resources in this department of natural history as a regular part of her instruction, and it will be to this section of her efforts that special attention will continue to be paid in the succeeding pages.

## CHAPTER X.

### *WOODPECKERS AND CUCKOOS.*

WHILE on her way to school the following day, Miss Truat was met by her two reconciled pupils, David and Staughton, who gave her the first intimation of her reported extensive dealings in witchcraft—intelligence which, while its absurdity excited a hearty fit of laughter, nevertheless very much annoyed her. In answer to her inquiries, David gave a detailed account of Miss Yost's meddling visitation and the manner in which he had corrected her misapprehensions. But the impression had extended to other families and still remained as their fixed belief, and this was most vexatious; and how to remove the foolish conception was no less perplexing. Feeling unable to reach any satisfactory solution of the question, she concluded to defer all action until a consultation with her father, further than to request David and Staughton to explain the matter of the owl and their restoration to the school, and then applied herself to the duties of the

day, in which she was soon so absorbed as to forget Miss Yost and her gossiping companions.

As they approached the schoolhouse they were met by young Van Gilder, who most heartily congratulated his two former associates on their determination to join him in efforts to make better improvement of their time and opportunities. With mutual pledges to be leaders henceforth in that which was right, as they had been in the wrong, they once more entered the school banded together.

The happy omen of the morning gave a new zest to the work of the day, so that both teacher and pupils experienced something of the pleasantness of wisdom's ways, and the result was a corresponding progress in the studies to which they gave their attention. These will not be given in detail, but the reader will be introduced at once to the afternoon's conversation about birds.

When the teacher was ready for the promised treat, she called attention to a noise which had been repeated many times during the day in the grove back of the schoolhouse, somewhat similar to a person striking sharp, quick blows with a hammer.

"Children," said she, "can any of you tell me what makes that tapping noise we have so often heard in the grove?"

"Woodpeckers," shouted a dozen or more voices.

"Yes, that is correct; and can you tell me how they make the noise?" was the further inquiry.

"They are pecking the trees with their bills," was the ready rejoinder.

"Right; and why do they do that?"

"To get worms," said some; "To make holes for nests," responded others.

"That is very good; both statements are correct," was Miss Truat's reply; "and I am glad to find that some of you have used your eyes so well and learned so much about woodpeckers. But now let me see if I cannot ask a question about them that you will not be so ready to answer: How many toes has a woodpecker on each foot, and how are they placed?"

This was a poser, and various guess answers were given to the question, only one of which was right, and that was made by David, who had shot so many that he could hardly have failed to notice the peculiarities sought after.

"Yes, David is right; they have four toes, two before and two behind, from which fact they are called *Scansores*, or *climbing birds*, and are generally placed as a distinct order. This curious formation is found in only three other species of birds, the cuckoos, parrots, and trogons; hence they have been assigned a place in the same general family, though in other respects quite different in habits and character.



“This afternoon I shall tell you something about two of the varieties, woodpeckers and cuckoos, leaving parrots for another time, as I think they deserve a separate notice. Besides, I have some fine living birds which I wish to show you.

“There are two or three things, children, which we must especially notice in woodpeckers as strikingly showing the wisdom of God in fitting each creature with organs exactly adapted to its condition. Here is a picture of the great *Pileated Woodpecker*, one of the largest and finest in America. (Fig. 15.) See with what a long, stout, and sharp bill he is boring into the trunk of the old tree to which he clings so closely.

“Now, when we remember that the food of woodpeckers mainly consists of insects and worms which breed and live burrowed in wood, and that they have to make holes many inches in depth for their nests, we can see that God gave them just such a bill as best serves their purposes. Had it been crooked, like the rapacious birds, or made short and blunt, as in most birds, they would have a hard time of it, and perhaps could not have existed at all. Then, to use their long bills to any purpose, they must have a harder, thicker skull and stronger muscles, and so God provided them with just such organs. A few such blows as they give on a hard tree would kill most



FIG. 15.—*Pileated Woodpecker.*

other birds by breaking their beaks or skulls, but the woodpecker will hammer away all day long and never seems to have a sore head for his pains. Open

a woodpecker's mouth, and you will find another arrangement to wonder at. Here is the head of one which I have preserved for the purpose of illustration. The tongue, you see, is capable of being protruded to a long distance, and is nicely barbed at the end by a number of little teeth turned backward. Now, the use of this is to draw forth the prey from its concealment. The bird makes a straight round hole down to where the grub lies, then spears him with this bearded tongue, and out he comes. This saves him the work of making an opening nearly as large as the worm, as we have to do when we seek them for bait.

“Now let us notice the toes of our specimen. In searching for his food the bird must necessarily run up and down the tree on which he is seeking, somewhat like a squirrel, and must have feet fitted for the purpose. Look at the toes of this pileated woodpecker. You see they are long, armed with sharp hooked claws, and turned two forward and two backward, two to hold and two to brace and support him. Observe, also, the peculiar formation of the tail and the use made of it. It is short and pointed, the quills being strong and covered with sharp fringes, that serve the same purpose as claws, penetrating the wood and thus forming a strong brace. Thus provided, the bird is enabled to run up and down the

tree, or to hold on to its side for hours as he works away at the hole which is to serve for a nest. Most of the species, when they wish to descend a tree, do so backward, not being able to turn their heads downward, like the creepers and nuthatches, about which we shall learn something hereafter. The exceptions are the little downy woodpecker and one or two others of the smaller ones, which run up and down or around the tree with equal facility.

“Having looked a little at the general habits of the woodpeckers, let us examine more particularly a few of the varieties, especially those which are so common in our woods, some of which are entertaining us all day long in the neighboring grove with their shrill brisk notes or hollow tappings as they search out their food.

“The great *Pileated Woodpecker*, whose picture we have before us, is one of the largest and most brilliant of the species, surpassed only by the *ivory-billed* variety, rarely seen here, but very common farther south. His general color is a greenish black, with splashes of white or pale yellow. But you will at once admire his splendid scarlet crest. It is in repose in our picture, but the live bird, when excited, has the power to erect the feathers which compose the crown, and then it has a grand appearance, like the plumage on a soldier's helmet. This noble bird is



found in all the northern states, inhabiting the deep woods and making occasional excursions to the new clearings, where the old girdled trees furnish him with a rich harvest of fat grubs. It is curious to watch him when thus busy, he works with so much energy. His great strength enables him to tear off large pieces of bark and wood, which he flings about with perfect recklessness, soon covering the ground with his chips. In making his nest he selects some old dead tree or limb, underneath which he makes a perfectly round hole, carrying it in for several inches, when it is turned downward for eighteen or twenty more. When nearly completed, the last fine chips are reserved to form the bottom of the nest, on which are deposited five or six large white eggs having a singular translucent appearance.

“The *Ivory-billed Woodpecker* is somewhat larger, but in many respects very much like the one just described. The main difference is in the white, ivory-looking bill which gives his name, and a light stripe down the neck. As these birds predominate in the extremes of our country, the pileated in the North and the ivory-bill in the South, and as we occupy the neutral ground of the class, we are occasionally favored by a visitation from both. To-day I recognized the voice of our northern visitor among those who have favored us with their music.



“Ah! but here is the most brilliant one of all the tribes, the well-known and admired *Red-headed Woodpecker*, dressed like a soldier for a parade day in his best uniform — scarlet head, black coat, and white small-clothes. We all know and welcome him. Oh how he loves cherries, mulberries, and sweet apples, and will have his share of them from our orchards. With some this has brought Master Redhead into much disrepute; but we have many apologies to make for him. His beauty and cheerfulness are so enjoyable that we can well afford a liberal share of our good things to induce him to remain in our fields. As it is but for a short season of the year that he lays a tax upon our orchards and corn-fields, while for the other long months he is working for our benefit, he deserves a full pardon for his transgressions. Like the rest of his kind, he looks to the hidden stores of insects and their eggs for his main support, and bill and tongue are busy in searching them out. Boys, spare the red-headed woodpeckers.

“But, see, on the old chestnut tree near the window is the smallest, most numerous, and familiar of the climbers—the pert little *Downy Woodpecker*, so called from a small strip of soft feathers extending down the entire back. Speckled, black, and white, with a little touch of red on the crown, it is a pretty little intruder into our gardens and orchards.

Here it selects some dead limb of an apple or pear tree, excavates its nest, the interior of which it polishes as smoothly as though done by a cabinet-maker, lays its six pure white eggs, and rears its little family, chirping and cheerful all the while. Who does not love to watch its nervous hopping up and down and around the tree, tapping here and there to find out the hiding-place of the coveted worm? and when found, how soon the barbed tongue draws him from concealment! The downy woodpecker is not only one of the most cheerful and tamest of our feathered visitors, but one of the most useful also. Some have given him a bad reputation by confounding him with another species, accusing him of the high crime of killing our young fruit trees by destroying the tender bark. The real culprit is the *Yellow-bellied Woodpecker*, or sap-sucker. This bird is somewhat marked, like our little friend, but the yellow belly and white stripe down the head and neck at once distinguish him. There is a marked difference, however, which must not be overlooked, nor its evidence set aside. The tongue in this case tells the truth when the testimony of the feathers may be equivocal. Compel the sap-sucker to show his tongue, and it will be found without a barb, and he is scarcely able to protrude it beyond the point of his bill. He does not live on worms, but bores

the tree for the tender bark and gummy juices. This being the fixed reputation of the sap-sucker, it is a fortunate circumstance that he is not near so common as the downy woodpecker.

“As a special plea for the downy woodpecker, it may be stated that it is the most industrious destroyer of that pest of our orchards, the apple-moth. A close observer has stated that the most thrifty trees in the orchard will be those bearing most marks of the downy woodpecker; if this is true—and there appears reason for the statement—it should be a high offence to kill one of these little birds, a cruelty of which I hope none of my scholars will be guilty.

“We have about thirty species of woodpeckers in North America, many of them but little varied from each other, hence we need not stop to particularize further than to notice one other variety this afternoon. This member of the family is one of the most noted and common in our fields, the *Golden-winged Woodpecker*, *flicker*, or ‘wake-up,’ as he is most generally called by the country people from his often-repeated cries of ‘wake-up!’ ‘wake-up!’

“He is a splendid bird. The wings are greenish-yellow and brown above and golden-yellow below, with tail of the same bright hue, with heart-shaped black spots near the ends of the feathers. The back of the head is adorned with a red crescent and a

lilac-brown gorget on the breast, with similar colored spots extending all over the under parts.

“This bird is full of restless vivacity, flitting here and there, now tapping on an old limb or prying into holes and crevices for stray grubs, and then



FIG. 16.—*Golden-winged Woodpecker.*

off again, filling the air with his garrulous cries. He is not so fond of trying his beak on every old limb or dead tree, nor is it fitted, as you will see by its slender form and crooked shape, for such constant hard service. Indeed, if it were not for his

toes, he would likely be classed with some other family of birds, perhaps among the *perchers*, as he is often seen sitting on a limb or perch like these birds—a position not often observed of the other woodpeckers.

“The flicker makes a nest in a hole, like the rest of the class, and deposits six white eggs. It is said, if these are removed, it will continue to lay on until eighteen or twenty are deposited before giving up the effort. Though this bird is very fond of fruit and berries, with a disposition to forage on the corn-field, yet, as its principal food consists of insects and worms, it should be spared both for its beauty and its usefulness as one of the friends of man.

“But we must say good-bye to the woodpeckers, and pay some attention to another class of this order of birds, the graceful little cuckoo. Here is one called the *Black-billed Cuckoo*. (Fig. 17.)

“You will notice, as he sits upon the limb, that the toes are shaped like those of the woodpeckers, though they are not so long, nor does he use them in the same way for climbing, as he usually sits perched, like most of the birds. The bill and whole make-up of the cuckoo, except the toes, differ from the class with which he has been associated, as do also his general habits. Thus the nest of the cuckoo is built in low bushes, being constructed with small



sticks, weeds, and a few dried leaves or moss, in which are deposited usually four greenish-blue eggs having a very fragile shell. It is a little curious that the European cuckoo uniformly avoids all the trouble of hatching and rearing its own species,



FIG. 17.—*Black-billed Cuckoo.*

forcing that duty on other birds. It builds no nest, but deposits its eggs in those of the sparrow, robin, or thrush, who are made to do the hatching and bear the burden of rearing the new family, often at

the expense of the legitimate offspring. The young cuckoos, finding the nest too cramped for two families, hustle the true heirs out into the cold world, and then enjoy their patrimony all to themselves. Perhaps for this, notwithstanding the formation of their toes, they should be placed among the robber birds. We can claim for our native species a better reputation, for they most cheerfully attend to family matters themselves.

“We have but two specimens of these birds in our section of the country, the one I have just showed you, and whose notes have given a name to the class. This bird comes from his southern home very early in the spring, and his well-known cry of *cuckoo!* *cuckoo!* is a most welcome harbinger of spring’s sunshine and flowers. Later in the season, when his cry is repeatedly heard, it is regarded as foretelling a speedy rain; hence he is often called the ‘rain-bird.’

“The other member of this family known to us is the *Yellow-bellied Cuckoo*, being distinguished by a somewhat lighter plumage and more secluded habits. (Fig. 18.) This bird is a rarer visitor to our woods than the black-billed species, and can be readily recognized by the striking difference in his rough notes. If in the vicinity, there will be heard coming abruptly from the grove, with a loud and metal-

lie ring, a repetition of his call: *Krow! krow! krow! kru! kru! kra! kra! kra!* When his cadence is ended, he darts off to some other point in the thick underbrush or tree-tops, and repeats it over and over. The cuckoos are cowardly birds, and are often driven



FIG. 18.—*Yellow-bellied Cuckoo.*

quite away by the robins, blue birds, or the little fly-catchers. They take their share of fruits, but are mainly insectivorous, and hence are useful, though charged with the crime of robbing the nests of smaller birds. If this is so—and I have only the assertion of others, as I have not been able to sub-

stantiate the indictment—it is a damaging characteristic, and will go far in justifying the gunner in decreasing the number.

“The cuckoo has always been a favorite bird with the poets, though why so specially chosen is not so very plain. They are fair-looking in form and plumage, but not equal to hundreds that are passed by in searching for them; nor are their harsh notes to be compared with the sweet warblings of larks, robins, and the scores of thrushes that make up our woodland melodies. It must be owing in part to their loud and cheerful voices being heard so early, when the chill and bleakness of winter still linger with us.

‘The cuckoo is a fine bird,  
He sings as he flies;  
He brings us good tidings,  
He tells us no lies.  
He sucks little birds’ eggs  
To make his voice clear;  
And when he sings, cuckoo,  
The summer is near.’

“Here, children, we must close our lessons for to-day; and as to-morrow will be Saturday, we shall have no school, so you may put your books carefully away until Monday.

“But you will remember my promise that you should make me a visit, and I would show you my

father's collection of birds and other curiosities. Well, to-morrow afternoon I wish to see you all at our house at three o'clock, and I hope we shall have a pleasant time together. Among other things which I have to show you, I have several live parrots from different parts of the world. Two or three of them are quite ready talkers and can sing snatches of songs, and I have no doubt they will amuse you very much. Hoping to meet you all to-morrow, for the present school is dismissed."

When thus set free, the children rushed out, delighted and happy, wondering at the new teacher, her beautiful pictures and interesting stories, and at themselves most of all. They had so long held the reputation of being bad that they could hardly think it possible that they had spent a whole week in school, and not one of them had been whipped, nor even scolded; nay, more, they had really found study delightful, and felt that they had truly learned something. And then, that the three boys who had always been so ready and bold to lead them into conflicts with their teachers should now be the attentive and submissive pupils of a little woman—well, they could not understand it; but this much they were agreed in: they liked the new teacher, witch or no witch.

When Miss Truat reached her home that evening,



her father greeted her with much astonishment, saying,

"Why, my daughter, I expected to see you coming home astride of a broomstick, on the back of an owl, or in some other outlandish way, in true witch-hag style. Perhaps you are not aware that you have the reputation of being one of the dark sisterhood; but it has come to my ears from one or two sources to-day; especially the squire has informed me that the matter is making quite an excitement in the neighborhood."

"Yes, father," was the daughter's reply; "I am aware of the absurd story raised, I believe, mostly by a Miss Yost and some other ignorant persons. It is even reported that I have been seen worshiping the evil one in the form of a terrible bird. I did not suppose that any one in this country and age could be so stupid. But the story is abroad and in real earnest, for the person named has actually called on Mrs. Overocker, David's mother, to warn her of my evil influence. I was never more tried by any circumstance in my life. On my way home from school I have been trying to decide what course I ought to pursue to arrest the absurd rumor; and as I have not been enabled to fix on any definite plan, I must refer the question to you, dear father. What ought to be done?"

“That question is easily and quickly answered, my child: just do nothing at all. Let the matter work itself out, which it will not be long in doing. In the process it may afford a good opportunity to remove in some degree the superstitions which gave birth to the charge. You know the old Dutch settlers on the Hudson and the Mohawk are very generally believers in witches and ghosts, and no denials or reasoning of ours will disabuse their minds of these long-cherished ideas. But let them all find out their mistake, as they will when they learn of your success as a teacher and your interest in the good of their children, and they will not only admit that you are guiltless of dealing in witchcraft, but have less faith in their notions than anybody else ever does.”

“Thank you, father; I think your advice is most judicious, and I will banish the absurd matter from my thoughts.”

## CHAPTER XI.

### *VISIT TO MISS TRUAT AND HER PARROTS.*

AT quite an early hour on Saturday morning, Miss Truat was called to the side-door by a very vigorous rapping, when, on opening it, she found Jim Lee, with a small bundle in his hand, swaying to and fro after the old fashion. As she started back with some surprise at seeing him, he stammered out, as though intending to explain the cause of his early visit,

“Jim knows.”

Recollecting the arrangement made with his parents, she at once surmised that Jim had been made to comprehend that he was to make his home with them; so, with great kindness, she replied to his salutation:

“Oh yes, Jim, it is all right; walk in, and you shall have some breakfast”—an invitation he well understood and never declined.

Calling Andrew, their kind-hearted and pious old Scotch gardener and man-of-all-work, Jim was

placed in his care to get his breakfast, and then to be installed in the small room which he was to occupy, located near that of his appointed overseer. Andrew had been made acquainted with Doctor Truat's purpose in taking Jim into his family, and most heartily entered into the plan of trying to alleviate his sad condition by giving such instruction as he could. While Doctor Truat and his daughter should attend to the physical and mental training of the poor young man, he readily took upon himself the duty of giving such care as should fit Jim to be of more service to himself and others. As he could chop wood and bring water so handily, Andrew rightly judged that he could be taught to do good service in the stable, and to use the hoe and rake in the garden.

After Jim had satisfied his appetite, which required no small quantity of food, Doctor Truat, as the first object of attention, took Jim to the neighboring store for an outfit of a more civilized pattern than he had been accustomed to, which had always consisted of only a coarse linsey shirt and cast-off pants so bepatched as to show scarcely a vestige of the original material. Hat and shoes had ever been strangers to his extremities in summer or winter. From the statement of his parents that they had never been able to make him wear such articles,

some trouble was apprehended in breaking the old habits. Jim was soon arrayed in a good strong suit of clothes; but when the outfit got beyond the familiar articles, he was perplexed with the excess. A coat was a superfluity and a bother. He knew not what to do with it. It was no sooner put on by the help of others than it was thrown off by Jim—a process which was several times repeated before he could be induced to desist from his disrobing act, and then only because the doctor held his hands when attempting its repetition. When success was thus gained, Jim stood with his arms stretched out like the wings of a guide-board, a picture of awkwardness and perplexity, muttering to himself, as was his wont when displeased.

After successfully getting Jim into a coat, a hat was placed on his head, which, as it was a light one of straw, seemed to arouse little objection, as he simply pushed it far over on the back of the head that he might indulge the usual habit of looking upward at a very sharp angle. But when it came to the boots, the largest pair in the store, Jim's opposition culminated. He could not be induced to put them on; and repeatedly, when his foot was forced into one, it was jerked off with a spitefulness that showed his anger to be not a little aroused. Not wishing to incur the danger that Jim should take himself off



to his swamp home, which he was always sure to do when teased or offended, all further efforts to cramp his large "understandings" were suspended, and he was allowed to carry his boots away under his arm, leaving to Andrew the task of inducing him to put them to their proper use.

On the way home from the store Jim's new rig caused no little mirth and curiosity; and well it might, for, aside from his unusual appearance, he walked with his arms held out at nearly a right angle to his body, stiff and motionless, bowing and twitching up his shoulders, his hat still pushed over on the back of his head, permitting his broad and peculiar face to exhibit all of its oddities of expression. This sight, in connection with the incidents related in conducting the school, led to many remarks about the peculiar ways of the Truats. While it was a wonder that the doctor should encumber himself with such a peculiar and useless character, yet most of the neighbors could not withhold their commendations of the kindness of the act. To some few, however, such disinterested benevolence as father and daughter had manifested was unaccountable; hence they could not resist the imputation of some selfish purpose that would yet crop out.

"You'll see byme-by," said the croakers, "if Jim's

'*natomy* isn't hung up on wires in the doctor's shop, or his big head put away soaking in *sperrits*. Just as though that old sawbones is a-going to feed that great foolish lout, who'll eat more'n a horse, all for nuthin'! Why, he'd be a bigger fool than Jim himself, and that doesn't stand to reason. Don't tell us. You'll see."

But leaving subsequent events to determine which party was right in its surmises, attention is recalled to the children's visitation and the use made of it by their kind teacher.

A full representation of the school was welcomed at Doctor Truat's at the hour named. After a few moments' chatting, the children were taken into the cabinet and shown the splendid collection of birds which had been gathered from all lands, where they almost stared their eyes out at the strange objects which they beheld. Then Miss Truat's rich portfolios of water-color drawings were opened for their free inspection, exciting equal delight and enthusiasm. Children always love pictures, but such beauties these young rustics had never dreamed of, and they could hardly be drawn away from them when their teacher was ready to conduct them to her aviary of parrots and other feathered pets. The young visitors had heard of birds that could talk, but had never seen one; hence, when they entered

the room where a half dozen were screaming and chattering, they were greatly astonished, some being really frightened, thinking that these curious creatures were only some of Miss Truat's associate witches. What a jumble of terms and noises saluted their ears! "Eveline!" "Pretty Polly;" "Polly wants a cracker;" "Doctor Truat," and "Get out!" were some of the outcries that filled the room. Most of the parrots were free, perched on roosts, or climbing from perch to perch by the use of bill and claws. Two or three occupied beautiful cages, because, as the teacher said, they were too much disposed to destructiveness and quarreling.

When fully assured that no danger was to be apprehended, the young visitors began to feast their eyes and ears. They gazed with wonder at the dazzling plumage of the birds, for Miss Truat had specimens of some of the most gorgeous of the class. There was the richest blending of the brightest of scarlet, green, yellow, blue, pink, and spotless white. Many of these colors were found handsomely balanced and blended in a single bird, as in the macaws of South America and the Australian cockatoos. When the first effect of their astonishment was passed, the children began quite a chatter with the birds, and many was the hearty laugh enjoyed at

the odd and sometimes pertinent answers made to their banterings. When they had been allowed sufficient time to enjoy this inspection and chatter with her parrots, Miss Truat called their attention to the special object of the interview, which was a free conversation respecting the class of birds they were examining.

"Well, children," she inquired, "what do you think of my birds?"

"Oh, they're splendid!" was the hearty response from many.

"Yes, you may well say so," was the teacher's reply. "Some of them, you see, have been quite

well educated and are well-behaved birds, but this big *Gray Parrot* from Western Africa, which you see in this cage, is too fond of trying his beak on his neighbors or my fingers, if he can get the chance, hence he has to be restrained of his liberty. But he is one of my very best talkers,

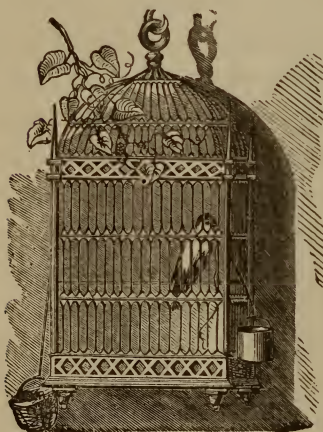


FIG. 19.—*Africanus in his Cage.*

and so I prize him very highly, notwithstanding

his ill-nature. I call him *Africanus*, and will tell you some stories about him before we are through. (Fig. 19.)

"Well, Aff," said the teacher, addressing the bird as she passed the cage, "how are you to-day?"

"*Cle-e-e-ar ou-t! cle-e-e-ar ou-t!*" was the sulky and long-drawn-out reply of the bird, which at the same time edged over to the opposite side of his cage.

"Oh, don't be so huffy," said his mistress, "and you shall have a nice piece of apple for your good manners."

"*Cle-e-e-ar ou-t!*" came louder and shriller.

"Well, well, be cross and go hungry," was the response of Miss Truat as she passed his cage, at which the bird strutted out with an exultant laugh, ending with a self-compliment of "Pretty Polly."

All this interested the children exceedingly, and made them eager for what was yet to come.

"Now, children," began the teacher, "if you are ready to listen, I will tell you something about the birds you are looking at.

"Parrots belong, as I have already told you, to the same family as the woodpeckers and cuckoos, because they have the same general conformation of the toes, though they do not use them exactly in the same way as the woodpeckers do. Instead of climbing up the trunks of trees, they use their claws



to perch and hang on the limbs. They will often hold on with one foot and reach far up or down to grasp another limb with the other, hook their beaks over the limb and drop themselves down, holding on entirely by the strength of their bills. Some varieties, as our own paroquet, are even known to sleep all night suspended in this way, though it surely must give them a touch of the neckache before morning.

“But the most astonishing thing respecting these birds is their ability to imitate human speech, if, indeed, it can be called only imitation, as some of their phrases and apt replies faintly touch the borders of the province of reason. And this remark, children, leads me to give you reasons why I have such a love for birds. I have already spoken of their beauty and their gift of song, but I think, with these gorgeously-feathered specimens before you, you will understand that I came very far short of presenting their full claims in this respect. Certainly they exhaust the capabilities of colors. Nothing that paints or dyes can do, will surpass the combination and brilliancy which we here behold in their feathered adornings. In gracefulness of form they have strong claims, and their general habits place them high in the ranks of the animal creation; but the chief claim to distinction of this class of the bird race is their

wonderful ability of speech. In this respect these birds stand alone in the animal creation, if we except man. Even the tribes of baboons and monkeys, which, according to some, are the connecting link between man and the races below him, and do really bear the nearest resemblance to him, exhibit no ability to acquire the marvelous gift of speech. But our beautiful parrots are very apt pupils, and some of them reach a high degree of perfection in the use of language. And we must pass to the credit of the bird race the fact that ravens, crows, daws, and the starlings have shown some talent for imitating the human voice, as individuals of all these varieties have been taught to articulate words. Birds are useful, they are beautiful, they can talk, they can sing, and, lastly, they have a keen sense of the beautiful, as we shall see by and by when we come to examine some of their curious and tastefully-constructed nests. In what other department of natural history can we find such another combination of wonderful endowments?

“But now let us take a closer view of our clamorous pets.

“There are more than three hundred and fifty varieties of parrots, and they are found in all parts of the world, except Europe and the northern regions, though principally clustering along the line

of the equator. Of the known species one hundred and forty-two are American, only one of which, however, is found in the United States. The islands of New Guinea come in for the next largest share; then Australia, Polynesia, Africa, and Asia follow as I have named them. In Europe they are found only as importations for the aviaries and museums of the curious.

“While the general name of parrot has been applied to this class of *Scansores*, they are subdivided into paroquets, macaws, and cockatoos, each division having some marked peculiarity to which we will refer.

“The paroquets are the smallest of the tribe, some of them being little larger than a sparrow. They are somewhat lacking in the splendor of plumage so generally characteristic of the class, though some are exceedingly handsome, nor do they seem to possess much ability to imitate the languages of man.

“As we have not time to give a general attention to the numerous individuals included in the three subdivisions, we will only describe one or two of each class, and will begin with this beautiful *South Carolina Paroquet* that is bowing so gracefully to us from his perch. (Fig. 20.)

“As I have before mentioned, this is the only individual of the race of parrots found in our country,

and is here confined to the Southern States. My specimen of these birds is a very fine one. He is not quite so large as the wild pigeon, but excepting the head and feet, not unlike this bird in general outline, as there is also great resemblance in the manner of flight, having the same swiftness and



FIG. 20.—*South Carolina Paroquet.*

whistle of wing and disposition to go in large flocks. But here the resemblance ends, for, beautiful as the wild pigeon is, it bears no comparison to this brilliant bird. The predominant color is a light grass-green, shading to purple or blue on the shoul-

ders of the wings. The head and neck are of the brightest yellow, with a patch of orange red on the forehead. Notice the strong hooked bill. The upper mandible is slightly movable, as in nearly all parrots, into which the lower one fits with a sharp tooth-like point, by means of which the bird readily opens the cockle-burr, its favorite food, shells, nuts, and pine-cones, and performs other necessary acts in feeding.

“When in Georgia a few years ago, I was much interested in watching these beautiful birds, admiring their graceful and rapid flight, or marking them as they clung to the bush of cockle with one foot and then reached out the other to pluck the burr from the end of the branch, it was done so handily, and then held to the mouth and peeled as neatly as a boy could do it. In this way a large flock renders essential service to the planter in ridding him of an abundant crop of a noxious weed.

“When a flock of paroquets light on a tree, they immediately begin to huddle close together, hitching sideways until the utmost compactness is obtained. If they are now fired at and one falls, they will circle around for a few moments and then alight on the same tree, and will do so repeatedly if the gunner keeps out of sight. The knowing sportsman in this way will secure a large number of the flock before



the birds are sufficiently frightened to fly away and escape his fatal aim.

“The paroquets do not roost on limbs like the perchers generally, but take possession of old woodpecker holes or other cavities in decayed trees, into which they pack themselves until there is no more space, when the unfortunates that have failed to find admission hang themselves on the outside with bill and claws rather than forsake their companions. Their nests are always found in similar places.

“Poor lonely ‘Kilinky,’ as I call my paroquet—this is the name given to these birds by the Chickasaw Indians—when night comes, having no companion to nestle up to, if a glass is placed at one end of his perch, so that he can see his own image, he will immediately hitch up to it, manifesting the utmost confidence and fondness. After a little billing and show of caresses, he will lay his head close to the image in the glass, and compose himself to sleep with great satisfaction.

“It is reported that the paroquet has been seen as far north as the banks of the Hudson, but it never was my good fortune to get a glimpse of one in these regions. If any of my scholars have ever seen a bird like this in the fields or groves around here, I should be pleased to have them mention it.”

"I never did, nor I, nor I," came from most of the children.

"Well," resumed Miss Truat, "if they ever did reach this high northern latitude, it must have been some stray one which soon found out what wandering boys learn by a bitter experience—that there is no place like home—and so made a rapid flight back to the sunny South, which I have no doubt Kilinky would speedily do if he had the freedom of the woods.

"The *Macaws* are mostly found in South America, and are remarkable for their great size, brilliant plumage, and exceeding long tails. The *Red and Blue* and *Blue and Yellow Macaws* are held to be among the handsomest birds in the world. I am very sorry that I have not a living specimen of these varieties to show you; but here is one of the red and blue kind, so well preserved that he looks as natural as life, from the inspection of which you will be convinced that their reputation for beauty has not been overstated. How richly red, scarlet, yellow, blue, and green blend and dazzle in their plumage! And mark his magnificent scarlet and blue tail, of which he may well be proud. This peculiar appendage, you will at once perceive, distinguishes the macaws from the gray and green parrots, these latter birds having tails formed more like the carnivorous tribes,

of which we have spoken in some of our former interviews.

"But let us return again to *Africanus*, and perhaps we shall find him in better humor, and I will give you the promised stories about parrots.

"Two or three years ago, while passing along one of the docks on the East River to visit a ship on which I expected to meet a friend, I was startled and offended by some one crying out with great rudeness, 'O—Su—san! Su—san!' I paused to see from whom this address came, but no person was in sight, and turned to pass on, when, with a louder cry and in a kind of singing tone, I heard the same voice, and was saluted with, 'O—Billy—Boy!—Billy—Boy!' ending the strain with a prolonged laugh. As I stood staring with wonder at hearing such salutations coming from some unknown source, a sailor who just then came upon deck pointed to the parrot sitting on the rigging near by, and said:

"'Never mind, miss; it's only this unmannerly bird spinning one of his yarns. Avast there, ye lubber! just coil and belay your tongue, will ye?' This was said to the bird, which gave a fretful cry, and began climbing up a rope, as though getting out of the way of an expected blow. I was so much pleased with the intelligence of the bird that I made a purchase

from the sailor; but I soon found that his manners had been very much perverted, and his vocabulary partook too much of the coarseness and profanity of his sailor instructors. He has learned to talk more like a gentleman, but is still disposed to be ill-natured, and so we will pass him by and pay more attention to this beautiful green parrot."

Miss Truat led her wondering and delighted young visitors to the perch of a splendid *Green Parrot* from the Amazon that had been calling her for some time, and now seemed delighted at the recognition.

"Here," said she, "is the prince of my talking birds. I have named him *Don Pedro*, to which he readily responds. One of you may ask him what his name is, and I think he will at once answer."

David complied with this request, and said, "Birdie, what is your name?"

"*Pedro! Pedro-o-o!*" was the prompt reply, at the same time the bird began to gently work his wings, and edge toward the questioner.

"He wants you to stroke his head," said Miss Truat, "and you can do it without fear, as Pedro is a most amiable bird."

"I obtained Pedro from an English family residing in Brazil when we were in South America. He was then a ready talker, and he has been improving ever

since. Among his other accomplishments, he has learned several snatches of song, which he is generally ready to repeat when any one starts the tunes with which he is familiar.

"Come, Pedro," said Miss Truat, "show my young friends how well you can sing. Give us 'Days of Absence;'" and she began to hum the tune. For a moment the bird seemed to listen, then settled down with an appearance of reflective composure, and began, in tones that much resembled the singing of an aged lady, and without much regard to correct time:

"Days—of-f-f—ab-sen-ce—sad—and—dre-ary-y." This line was repeated several times, the bird once stopping in the middle of the verse to interject a demand for a cracker, which excited the mirth of his young auditors. After the same style a line of "Auld Lang Syne" was sung, and one or two other simple airs, showing a wonderful degree of cultivation of the vocal organs.

"Now," said the teacher, "ask him whom he votes for." In reply to this question, put by one of the children, Pedro bristled up his feathers, and cried out in a loud voice, "*Old Hick-o-re-e-e! Gen-er-al Jack-son-n-n!*" At this the boys gave a loud "Hurrah!" to which Pedro responded, "*Hur-rah-h-h!*" with equal enthusiasm.



Pedro gave many other evidences of his wonderful ability to imitate the human voice, oftentimes in a manner to show that he had some idea of the import of his words and ability to enjoy the wit of his own remarks.\*

"So apt is the parrot to imitate our language," added Miss Truat, "that it is not always safe to have them about, as a little incident will show. A parrot that was kept on board of a vessel very naturally acquired many of the phrases used by the officers in managing the ship. Among others were those so often used in loading and unloading—'hoist away,' 'let go,' and 'heave away.' On one occasion they were hoisting some ladies on board by the usual means of a chair fastened to a rope which was passed through a pulley at the end of the yard. When one was landed on deck, the order was, 'let go,' as the chair went down to the boat for another. But, unfortunately, just as one had nearly reached the deck the sailors, who were looking in another direction, heard the order, 'let go,' and obeyed it promptly, and down went chair and lady with a splash into the water. When inquiries were made into the cause of the disaster, it was found that

\* The reader is informed that these statements truly set forth the abilities of a green parrot belonging to a friend of the writer.

‘poor Poll’ had given the order, and not the proper officer.

“I remember a case quite as laughable with no unpleasant results, except to the poor cook who was the subject of it. An acquaintance had a very smart gray parrot that was very fond of a peculiar kind of short-cake which the family cook was accustomed to make. On one occasion, when the family were all absent, the cook invited a number of her cronies to a social dish of tea, for which she was preparing the favorite short-cake—a process which the parrot had watched with longing expectancy. Just as the cake was ready for the table the family unexpectedly returned, and the cook to hide her misdoings slipped it under the cushion of an arm-chair which the mistress was accustomed to occupy. The family were soon seated around the table, on which nothing but dry bread was placed. The parrot seemed to notice this, and fearing, no doubt, that he would lose the expected treat, began to cry out: ‘*Burn, missus—cake-under-cushion,*’ and repeated it so often as to attract attention, when an examination was made and the cook’s duplicity exposed.

“But here,” said Miss Truat, “are my beautiful *Cockatoos* that have patiently been waiting for their share of attention. This class of parrots is confined mainly to the Eastern Archipelago and Aus-

tralia, being especially numerous and brilliant in the latter country. They are of different sizes and colors, but are all distinguished by a magnificent crest of feathers on the top of the head. Fortunately, I have one of the most beautiful of the spe-



FIG. 21.—*The Pink Cockatoo.*

cies, the *Pink Cockatoo*, in which this appendage is splendidly shown. (Fig. 21.)

“One can scarcely conceive of any shades more delicate than those which predominate in the plum-

age of this bird. A spotless white, with the faintest flush of pink, is the general color. Around the base of the beak runs a narrow crimson line, extending to the roots of the crest feathers, which latter are long, pointed, and barred with golden yellow, crimson, and white. The neck, breast, and under the tail and wings are deep crimson red; and when the bird elevates his crest, as you will be sure to see him do when I caress him, it is hard to conceive of anything in the animal kingdom more magnificent."

The looks of wonder and admiration which the children gave while this bird was under examination fully attested the interest which they felt and justified the statements of the teacher.

"As the habits of parrots are much alike in all countries," said Miss Truat, "we need not particularize further, so I will leave you for a little while to talk with my pets and examine them at your leisure, and then you will be prepared, I trust, to go home feeling that you have spent a happy afternoon."

With this remark Miss Truat left her pupils to arrange a little collation of cakes and fruit. As this treat was wholly unexpected, the young visitors were surprised and delighted when they were invited to the repast and urged to help themselves freely, which they were not slow to do.

After the sharp appetites of her young friends had been fully satisfied, Miss Truat thanked them for their excellent behavior, then dismissed them, feeling more than repaid for the little tax it had necessarily involved of time and outlay.

As the children scattered to their homes that evening it was with a feeling somewhat akin to awaking from a delightful dream so real as to leave the mind for a time in doubt between the vision and reality. They had been so happy, and in such an unusual way, that it seemed hard to make it real. How they talked and laughed over the odd expressions of the parrots, now imitating their manner of speech or dilating on their splendors! Nor did the wonderful new teacher fail to come in for words of love and admiration, which, had she heard them, would have abundantly satisfied her of her full possession of their affections and confidence.



## CHAPTER XII.

### *SINGING BIRDS.—THRUSHES.*

THE report of the delightful day spent with their teacher which the children carried home from their visit fully removed any lingering doubts prejudicial to the reputation or ability of Miss Truat, and gave her most generally the moral support of the parents of the district. The only dissatisfied ones were Miss Yost and two or three cronies. To make such a stupid blunder and be so soon detected was most humiliating. Besides, it was a death-blow to her reputation as a “discerner of spirits” and retailer of neighborhood gossip. She could not venture into the streets without being repeatedly accosted as to the state of witchdom and the prosperity of owls in general. This state of things soon became so unpleasant that she found it convenient to make a visit to her Dutch grandmother living on the other side of the Hudson, where she tarried until her unfortunate mistake was somewhat forgotten.

It will not be necessary to follow the daily routine of Miss Truat’s instruction farther than to note the

general success of her efforts; hence special attention will be confined to her lessons in ornithology, which she had resorted to not so much as a science as an entertainment and a means of obtaining a moral power over her pupils. Accordingly, without detailing any intermediate events, the reader will be introduced to the next conversation about birds.

“At our last interview,” began Miss Truat, “we had a very pleasant intercourse with some birds that had acquired much ability in using human speech, with perhaps a glimpse here and there of its significance. This afternoon it is proposed to introduce you to a class possessing the power, not of imitating one of our gifts, but rather of exciting us to emulate one that they possess, thereby repaying us for whatever portion of our endowment of speech their kindred has borrowed. If the parrots have to come to us to acquire a few words of human language, we may go to thrushes, larks, and sparrows when we wish to make attainments in the delights of song. As ability to acquire the art of speech is the peculiar natural gift of man, so capability of song is the special endowment of the birds; for except the purring of some of the feline race, as the cat, which can hardly be called singing, the birds alone are gifted with the power of song in common with man, making them joint possessors of one of the angelic attri-

butes. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that the angels are represented as wearing something of the outward shaping of the birds—they are winged. We might, perhaps, more properly say that when God bestowed upon birds the angelic gift of song he gave them wings as appropriately going with the benison. But more especially should it be said, to increase our love and admiration for the birds, that when Deity would take any of the animal shapings in which to reveal himself especially to the world, the snow-white dove hovers over the only begotten Son of God as he comes up dripping from the sacred waters of the Jordan. If, therefore, the Saviour is set before us as a Lamb to typify sacrifice and atonement for sin, in the emblematic Spirit-dove we have intimations of the purity and employments of heaven, to which that atonement leads us. These facts of divine goodness will prepare us to continue our study of birds with a devout and keener relish, for we shall understand that it is not the bird simply nor his marvelous gift of song that we are considering, but also the wonderful and gracious provisions of an all-wise Creator.

“ We must not fail to note how lovingly the great Father of all watches over his winged songsters. Not a little sparrow, one of the least of the feathered choir, ever falls to the ground or hushes its tiny

note that God does not mark its fall and hear its faintest dying trills. And what a sweet and consoling doctrine our blessed Saviour bases on this divine carefulness for the birds! 'Are ye not better than the fowls?' Oh, who can doubt the loving superintendence of our heavenly Father after such an assuring presentation of it?

"But now I hope you are saying, 'Oh, if God has made such beautiful things for us to admire, let us look at them with sharper eyes, and open our ears with a quicker sense to drink in their sweet melodies.' Pausing, therefore, in our moralizing, let us use our senses to gather richer and sweeter lessons of the divine goodness. And listen! What a gush of melody fills yonder grove! It would almost seem as though God had sent a full choir of his feathered singers to hover around our schoolhouse and make our lessons more impressive. We can recognize a dozen or more of bird voices in the grand chorus of melody which is now delighting us, thrush and robin, blackbird and sparrow, pewit and wren, bluebird and warbler, and many others, all pouring forth their gladness in an anthem of praise. (Fig. 22.)

"Now listen to that delicious thrush solo; anon a duet of robins; then a gush of lark melody, the warble of sparrows, trill of the wren, ending up with a grand chorus by the whole choir. With such de-



lightful music, we cannot help forgetting all about fine feathers and poor imitations of speech, more entranced with the angelic gift and exercise of song.



FIG. 22.—A Bird Chorus.

“When you were looking at the gaudily-plumed parrots and macaws, and thought of our birds in comparatively plain attire, you might have envied



the countries where those gorgeous creatures are found; but now, listening to the delicious music which ours are pouring into our ears, I think you will all admit that we are more blest in our allotment.

“The bird is a more natural singer than his human competitor. His song has more of spontaneity, though, like us, perfection is only the result of cultivation. It is a question if any of the wild and rude tribes ever acquire any vocal ability which we would call singing, or enjoy as we do civilized music. I have been among several of the rude races, especially our native Indians, and certainly never heard among them all any musical performances that were pleasing to the ear, or that could be called music. True, they have what they call songs, but they are only dreary and monotonous recitations, or long sentences repeated in harsh sing-song tones, not approaching to a comparison with the rich bird-melodies of their native woods. It may be asserted, therefore, that song is more natural to birds than to us. Mr. Broderip, an English naturalist, and a great lover of birds, by a long and careful series of experiments, proved that to most song-birds their vocal ability came naturally and early. He learned that each species has a certain range of family notes, which are developed in a uniformity of song, but capable

of being largely varied by imitation and cultivation. That is, a thrush will generally give the notes of a thrush; but if taken from its natural associates and placed with other species, it will acquire more or less of their songs. Thus he found that a goldfinch would imitate a wren and a sparrow acquire the notes of a blackbird or a linnet when kept with these birds. Taking advantage of this ability of imitation, those who deal in song-birds have 'calls' and 'bird organs' to cultivate their young birds and develop their vocal organs. Sometimes boys are found who possess wonderful ability to imitate birds, and are employed as bird instructors. I have known two or three who were constantly engaged in giving music lessons to canaries, mocking-birds, and other favorites of the aviary. (Fig. 23.)

"Of all the *oscines*, or singing birds, the *Thrushes* are generally placed at the head, and very deservedly, for most of the tribe have wonderful capacity of song. In form they are small and not ungraceful, but have little to boast of in respect to gayety and brilliancy of plumage. Their colors are mostly confined to the sober shades of brown and ashy grays, and are well represented in the robin, brown thrush, and cat-bird, all very familiar to you.

"Perhaps, following the order of merit, the *Mocking-bird* deserves the first notice at our hands. In

FIG. 23.—*A Bird Instructor.*

the whole range of woodland vocalists this wonderful singer stands confessedly supreme. You saw and heard my beautiful specimen on your late visit to

my collection, and I am sure you never heard his equal in our woods and groves. His variety of notes is endless, and he rarely tires of pouring them forth ; morning, noon, and often in the midnight if the moon shines, his sprightly melody is filling the whole house, or his apt imitations of dog, cat, creak of wheelbarrow, or wood-sawing are exciting our mirth and astonishment.

“The mocking-bird is not often seen so far north as the banks of the Hudson, though individuals have on rare occasions ventured thus far from their native South.

“This bird is slightly larger than the common cat-bird, which is a near relative, with a greater length of tail and several shades lighter in color, this being a prevailing ashy gray, fading to whitish underneath. The female is perceptibly less in size, and being songless, is not much sought after as a cage bird. But forgetting the plain appearance of our chief singer, let us listen to his infinite variety of notes, for there is absolutely no limit to his capability of imitation. Those who have only heard the mocking-bird in captivity know but little of his vocal accomplishments. He must be heard in his native woods, for he is pre-eminently an arboreal bird. He loves the thick woods and fragrant hedges. Here he delights to hop and flit from spray to spray



with nervous restlessness, all the while catching up the strains of other birds and ending the refrain with a finish and heartiness, as though he was the general instructor of the feathered races, and was teaching them how to sing their own songs.

“I once had a good opportunity to witness the astonishing powers of mimicry possessed by the mocking-bird. On a certain occasion I was spending several months with a friend who lived in close proximity to a ship-yard and two or three other manufacturing establishments where a variety of noises were heard quite out of the way of ordinary sounds. Among other things which attracted my attention was a saw-pit where men were engaged in cutting ship-timber, one standing on the log and the other in the pit. The large saw which they used made a peculiar crisp sound as it passed through the wood, unlike the noise of any other sawing. For two or three days I heard this sound late in the evening and at the earliest show of daylight, when I knew that all the other employés were resting from their toils, and wondered that these men, who certainly seemed to have much the hardest share of the labor, should be required to render such an extra amount of service. On expressing my surprise at this unequal division, I was laughingly told that the sounds I heard were the imitations of the process made by



a pet mocking-bird. I could hardly credit the story until I had watched the bird and heard him repeat the imitation myself. It was an astonishing feat, and I have not doubted the capacity of the mocking-bird since. The other incident which I shall relate, which also came under my observation, will not only show the wonderful vocal capacity of the bird, but also indicate that he has some appreciation of humor and understands practical jokes.

“When visiting the south-western borders of Arkansas a few summers ago, I tarried several days at a house situated on the borders of a handsome grove, in the edge of which was growing a large tree with a top of very dense foliage. I noticed repeatedly, while listening to the splendid bird-music of the grove, that this particular tree was often filled with multitudes of the various kinds of birds in the neighborhood, from which they would suddenly scatter in the wildest fright at the screaming of a hawk or some other bird of prey; and yet I never could get a sight of such a bird. Watching to solve the mystery, I soon discovered the cause of this repeated demonstration. A splendid old mocking-bird would ensconce himself in the thickest boughs of the tree-top, and then imitate the love calls of the various birds until the tree was fairly alive with curious dupes, peeping here and there for

the supposed concealed amorous caller, when all at once the delighted wag would scream out in the alarming tones of the dreaded enemy, and then come from his concealment and hop around on the outermost branches to enjoy the panic which he had so cunningly plotted and carried out.

“And here let me say, children, that of all my pets I have felt most condemned when I have watched the restless flittings of my mocking-bird. He flies and hops, hops and flies, with ceaseless activity, using the utmost limits of his cage, and often trying the strength of his prison, as though he would break its bars and regain his longed-for freedom. I take extra care of him, and spend more time than with any of the rest of my birds in trying to gratify his wants, yet I never fail to experience a pang of regret at the restraints which I have put upon him, nor to recall a striking anecdote which I once read, and which awakens a sense of condemnation because I cannot bring myself to act on its suggestion.

“A poor sailor who had but recently escaped from a long and cruel imprisonment among some of the wild Arabs, on passing a market where several birds were exposed for sale, paused before them for a time, while the tears filled his eyes, and then asked the price of the birds. When told, he promptly paid the money, and taking one from the cage, gave it a



FIG. 24.—*The Sailor Freeing the Captives.*

toss into the air and restored it to its native freedom. This process he repeated until every bird was released from its captivity. (Fig. 24.) The crowd looked on with astonishment, thinking the poor man

demented. When asked to account for his strange conduct, he replied: 'I was once a captive myself, and know too well the sweets of liberty not to sympathize with even a little bird in its captivity.'

"As it may be proper to kill a single bird to study its formation and organs, and take an egg or two for a like scientific purpose, so it may be allowed to restrain one of its native freedom in order to learn more perfectly its habits. But the indiscriminate imprisonment of wild birds, especially those of so vivacious temperaments as the whole race of thrushes, must be regarded as cruel and inexcusable.

"I have said that the *Cat-bird* is a near relative of the mocking-bird; and so he is—a blood kin but one remove, and with no little share of his gifted kinsman's ability. When disturbed, or when you are in the immediate vicinity of its nest, the well-known harsh cry which has given the bird its feline name is heard repeated over and over with much petulance. But when the soft, still evening comes, then watch him as, seated on the topmost bough, he carols so joyously with a delicious mellowness, and you will call him no mean singer. Listen to the one just now singing in yonder cherry tree with a fervor and sweetness that seems intended to justify the statements I have made of the ability of his race. The cat-birds are among the most plentiful and



familiar of our northern birds, being found everywhere, from early spring to late autumn, in our fields and gardens. If fed and petted a little, they become quite tame and confidential. I have now a splendid old bird that seems quite as much attached to me as I to him. When working among my flower-beds, he uniformly takes his place on a branch nearest to me, singing all the while, as though to gratify me, which he certainly does. If I move to another point, he follows immediately to the new position, repeating the act as often as I change places.

“At this time his mate is occupying her nest on the arm of a grape trellis, from which she peeps out demurely at our flirtations, as though having the same confidence and interest in my operations and kindness as her noble mate. I can assure you that I take more pleasure in my free cat-birds than I do with my imprisoned mocking-bird, and should most certainly set the latter at liberty did I not know that I should lose him altogether, and that he could not long enjoy his freedom so far from his native home.

“In the birds known by the class name of thrushes England has, perhaps, a greater variety than we have, though none that can equal our mocking-bird in richness and variety of notes. Chief among our birds of this class is the *Song Thrush*. (Fig. 25.)



“The color on the back is a clear cinnamon brown, with a white and speckled breast. As is clearly seen, it has little to boast of in the adornment of feathers, but its cheerful song is one of the most delightful heard in our woods. It is not as plentiful



FIG. 25.—*The Song Thrush.*

as we could wish, nor are those which make us a visitation inclined to be familiar, as they seek rather the seclusion of the thick woods and shady places. When two song thrushes are in near proximity, they seem to vie with each other in the vivacity of their notes, singing in responsive strains, each catching

up the refrain from the other, and repeating it louder and more prolonged until their utmost powers of song are exhausted. They come to us about the middle of May, and are always welcome. The nests and eggs of the song thrush are so nearly like those of the robin, with which you are all so familiar,



FIG. 26.—*Thrushes at Song and Supper.*

that it requires an expert to readily tell the difference. Like the robin, their food is varied, consisting of worms and insects during the early spring and fall ; but when summer brings its delicious fruits, they claim their full share. If a wild cherry tree stands on the borders of some grove, or a rich mulberry in the time of ripeness, the thrush, with other

birds, will be sure to find out the treasures, and will gather them, singing and eating, seeming to enjoy song and supper with equal relish. (Fig. 26.)

"The *Brown Thrush* or *Thrasher* (Fig. 27), as we generally call it, is a more familiar bird than the one

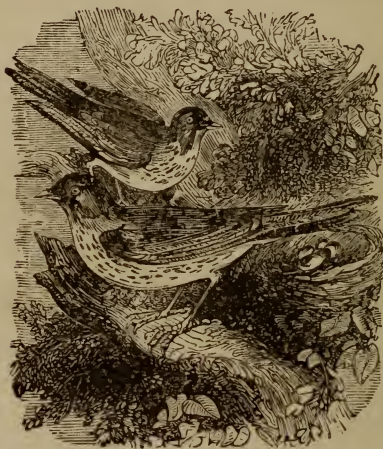


FIG. 27.—*Brown Thrashers and Nest.*

we have just been talking about. It is of a lighter color, and the largest of our thrushes. Its song is so sweet and varied as to compare favorably with the mocking-bird. It has one very excellent trait: in dark and gloomy days, when most other songsters are silent, and even in the night, it will break forth in a wild gush of melody; hence the bird is a favorite with those who are fond of bird-music. Its

chosen nesting-place is a thorn-bush or clump of briars, or the thick branches of the cedar. It builds first with sticks, then dry leaves or moss, finishing off with hair or the fine fibres of bark or small rootlets. The eggs are generally five in number, of a pale bluish ground richly speckled with brown.



FIG. 28.—*Hermit Thrush.*

“The *Hermit Thrush* (Fig. 28) is one of our American birds, but being a close recluse, it is seldom seen. It is quite common in Kentucky and the regions immediately south of that state.

“There are but two more of the thrush family that we shall notice this afternoon, and the first is the *Golden-crowned Thrush*, or *Oven-bird*. Its uni-



form color is an olive green slightly tinged with yellow, striped on the head, and speckled-breasted. It is quite plentiful; but confining its range to the most secluded parts of our bushy swamps, it is not often met with, and must be sought for with much carefulness by those who wish to study its habits. In the way of song it is quite behind those already mentioned, but in the construction of its nest it surpasses them all in skill and neatness. The name of oven-bird suggests the peculiarity of its nest, which is much in the shape of an old-fashioned country out-door bake-oven. The nest is built on the ground in some dry place on the borders of a swamp, most generally at the roots of a clump of bushes or a tree. The materials used are dry leaves and grasses and the soft lint from the bark of old logs. The whole structure is woven together with great skill and compactness, and carried up and over the top, forming a complete roof, with a small hole in the side for entrance. In this tasteful habitation four eggs are usually deposited, of a delicate creamy white, and beautifully speckled with the softer shades of brown. These birds possess a peculiar trait, seen also in some other varieties, of trying to draw an intruder away from their nests by feigning lameness. Both male and female will throw themselves on the ground, spread out their wings, flutter, and



limp along as though so lame that they can hardly move; but when they have drawn you a sufficient distance from the cherished abode of their young, suddenly they recover from their counterfeit infirmities, and off they go with a whirr, leaving you the dupe of their artifice."

At this point David could not resist the impulse to break the thread of Miss Truat's narrative, as he had so often witnessed in his swamp-hunting the habits of which his teacher had been speaking.

"Oh, Miss Truat," said he, "I've often seen these birds do just as you have said; and it was so curious that I couldn't help watching them. But, I tell you, they didn't cheat me mor'n once or twice. I know where there's lots of them birds, and I think I can find one of their nests, if you want one."

"Indeed, I should like to see one very much, David," was his teacher's reply, "and have long desired to add one of their eggs to my collection. And, by the bye, this reminds me that on next Saturday afternoon I propose taking a ramble in the woods, and I shall be very happy to have as many of you go with me as can be spared from your homes. Our object will be to observe the habits of the birds, study the construction of their nests, and begin our collection of birds' eggs. I am going to take

poor Jim with us, who so well knows where to find the nests of his favorites, and I have no doubt we shall have a very nice time. All who can accompany me will be at the schoolhouse promptly at one o'clock.

“Now let us briefly notice one other member of the thrush family before we close our interview, and I do it because he is somewhat peculiar: it is the *Water Thrush* or *Wagtail*. You have, no doubt, often seen the species around our ponds and creeks, where they are so commonly found searching for their favorite food, which consists mostly of aquatic insects. While thus engaged, as they run along the shore, they keep up a constant motion, jerking the tail up and down, from which habit they derive their more common name. If disturbed, they fly off with a chatter to a short distance, and then resume their search. When running along the shore, they have but a sharp chirp, repeated at short intervals; but after their wants are satisfied, they retire to some seclusion, when their song possesses rare sweetness and variety. The nest of the wagtail is constructed much after the pattern of the oven-bird's, in which are deposited four eggs of a most delicate flesh color and tastefully speckled. I am exceedingly desirous of obtaining one of these beauties for my collection, and hope we may be so fortunate as to find one during our excur-

sion in the woods, as it is now about the season when the bird is nesting.

"At our next meeting we shall continue our examination of the singing birds; and so, wishing you all a good-afternoon, you are dismissed."

"Well, Dave," asked young Van Gilder, when they were going home from the schoolhouse, "what do you think of our new teacher? She's a curious kind of a witch, isn't she?"

"See here, Jake," was the reply: "don't you say witch when you speak of her; I think she's more like an angel. I never could have believed that I could have been so changed in so short a time. I feel so different and like such different things that somehow it doesn't seem real like."

"Changed in so short a time!" exclaimed Jake; "I didn't think you or I, or, as for that matter, the whole lot of children, could be so *transmogrified* in a dozen years. Why, I used to think that books and study were just the meanest things under the sun, but somehow Miss Truat makes them so nice that I love them mor'n play."

"I guess it is nicer than play," responded David; "why, it seems as though I'd got new eyes and new ears, and just found what little brains there is in my numskull, which I intend to use for a little better purpose hereafter than trapping coons and muskrats."

"I'm with you there, Dave," was the prompt reply of Jacob. "If there's a chance to be somebody, as Miss Truat says, I'm going to look out for mine, and so I'm done playing the fool or rogue."

"I know one thing I'm bound to do," said David, after a pause: "I know there's lots of them wag-tails around Dakin's pond, and Miss Truat shall have one of their eggs before Saturday, or I'll wear my boots out."

"Now, see here, Dave," was Jake's reply: "you got the owl for the teacher, and you might let me and Stote have a chance to get her the egg; it's no mor'n fair."

"Well, chum," was David's answer, "I'd like to do it myself first rate; but if your heart's set on't real bad, I'll hold up and gin you a chance, but she's got to have the egg somehow."

"Thank you, Dave; I and Stote will go after it right off."

Thus it is seen by a few weeks' kindness and tact an entire revolution was accomplished among the young Arabs of the district. Instead of plotting how they might resist and annoy their teacher, they were now vieing with each other for the privilege of doing her service—an apt illustration of the divine proverb: "A man that would have friends must show himself friendly."

## CHAPTER XIII.

*ROBINS, BOBOLINKS, BLACK BIRDS, ORIOLES,  
AND LARKS.*

WHEN the hour arrived for a continuance of the conversations about birds, the children were all ready for the anticipated treat. Miss Truat began by saying:

“We have one member of the thrush family, which we were talking about at our last interview, that I have reserved for our present conversation because it has always been a special favorite of mine—more, perhaps, from some early associations than for any superior attractions which the bird may possess, though it is not without high claims both for its beauty and song. I refer to the sweet little *Robin Redbreast*, so familiar to us all. This dear songster is so common in our fields and pays such confidential and social visits to our door-yards and gardens as to require no minute description. Of all our home birds, excepting, perhaps, the little sparrows and blue birds, it is the earliest and most easily recognized by all children. It was certainly



the first bird that attracted my special attention, and from that day I have cherished the warmest affection for it.

“When but a little child, a dear and only brother, who many years since passed away from earth, discovered a pair of robins making their nest on a branch of a tree that reached within a few feet of a window. He soon informed me of his discovery, and led me to the window where we could watch the industrious pair. (Fig. 29.) We could almost touch the growing nest, and I still well remember the thrill of delight I experienced as we noticed the daily progress until the structure was completed. At first the birds were a little shy, but soon seemed to understand that we meditated no harm, and so went on with their work undisturbed by our presence and almost constant oversight. When first discovered, they had already laid a good foundation of sticks and straw, well cemented with mud which they obtained from the roadside. It was quite rough on the outside; but the interior was beautifully shaped and smooth, and was finally finished off with down of feathers, bits of wool, and hair obtained from the neighboring pasture.

“The adjustment of these materials was mainly done by the female bird. She would take the articles from her mate, place them in the nest, and then

turn herself round and round, pressing her breast against the rim of the nest until they were worked



FIG. 29.—*Watching the Building of the Nest.*

into the place and shape desired. When the dainty nest was completed, we watched with the greatest impatience for three or four days to discover the

first egg. At last, much to our gratification, the old bird took her place on the nest; and when she again flew away, there lay before our ravished eyes a beautiful little blue egg. Oh how we clapped our hands with delight and called all our young friends to admire our treasure! And then what daily watching for the additional azure gems! No miser ever gloated over his accumulating gold with more faithfulness and devotion than we did over the daily increase of our treasures. At last four little beauties were reposing on the downy bottom of the nest. My father, who was then deeply interested in the study of birds, entered into our enthusiasm, and explained the facts as the progress of raising the family went on. Though our pleasure was great on seeing the full complement of eggs reposing in the nest, it had its culmination when, making our morning visit, we found four little fledglings with the queerest little bills wide open and chirping for something to fill them. How we clapped our hands and called for father and mother to come quick and see the wonderful little birdies! The parent birds were flitting anxiously around near by, uttering their cries of alarm at our near presence to their cherished younglings. What a delight it was to us to see the old birds bring worms and insects and drop them into the open and greedy mouths of their little ones!

Day by day, almost hour by hour, we were on the alert to mark the wonderful economy of our robin's nest until the young birds left it to take their places in the great family of robins. In a few days after the matured brood had left the nest, with some slight repairs, the same process was gone over again, much to our delight, and a second brood went forth from the same home-nest. From that summer I date my interest in the affairs of bird-life and my special love for the robins—an affection which they seem to reciprocate. At the present time I have a pair that have taken a notion to build their nest on the narrow step in front of a box intended for blue-birds, and quite within reach of my hand. It is a queer and difficult place to build a nest, and why the birds should select it, with so many convenient nooks suited for the purpose, I am at a loss to conceive, and have flattered myself that they have chosen this place to put themselves as much under my notice and care as possible, which certainly shows their discernment.

“Robins are plentiful in all our northern states during the warm months, and some of them remain the whole year round. In New Jersey and Pennsylvania they may be seen in large numbers quite early in the spring, when their sweet songs give a cheerfulness to the scene while yet ‘winter is lingering in the lap of spring.’ I have often heard them



with great delight on some early vernal day as, perched on the bare spray, with the great soft flakes of snow falling around them, they were pouring forth their delicious warble, sweet prophets of the bright summer soon to come. (Fig. 30.)

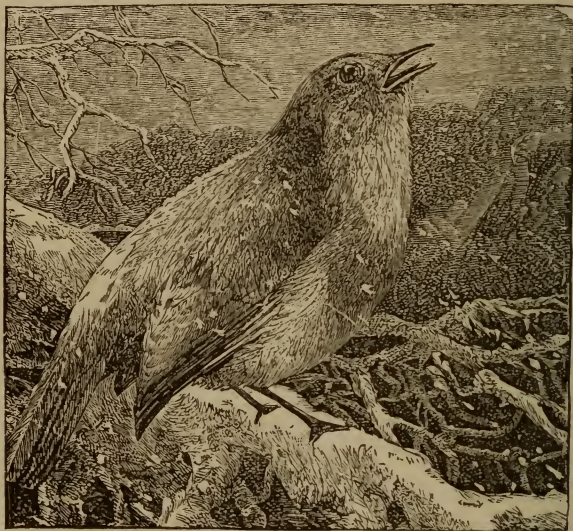


FIG. 30.—Robin Singing in a Snow-Storm.

“The dear robins! Let us love and protect them, for they are among our most cheerful and useful birds. True, some careless observers have given them a bad name for the small depredations they make on our orchards and fruit gardens, and it cannot be denied that they do claim their full share of



these luxuries in their season. But we must remember how small a repayment this is for the long service they have rendered in saving them from entire destruction by the noxious insects which they have devoured. It has been proved by actual experiment that no bird of its size destroys such vast numbers of insects and worms. A young robin, it has been found, will eat its own weight of these pests in forty-eight hours. This fact shows what vast numbers must be destroyed to feed one brood of young birds. If any doubt this, they have but to watch a nest of robins and count the numbers which are fed to the young during a single day, and they will be satisfied that there is no exaggeration in the statement.

“Like the cat-bird, the robin has two kinds of notes, one of alarm and the other its song proper. During the nesting season and the rearing of its young, if disturbed, the parent birds fly anxiously about, sharply crying *pip-pip*, *toot-toot*, until the cause of alarm is removed. The song of the robin is very sweet and given at seasons when it can be most appreciated. At the earliest dawn of a soft spring morning it is almost the first sound heard after awaking from the slumbers of the night, when the mind is calm and tranquil. With a little help of the imagination, its song vocabulary is very suggestive of the spirit which we should carry into the

affairs of the day. To my ear the burden has always the sound of '*Char-i-ty, char-i-ty, clear-it-up, clear-it-up, prove-it, prove-it.*' In the heat of the day the robin seldom sings; but when the gentle shades of evening come, then, as though retrospecting the day, with its fret and friction, it takes its place on the topmost limb of some neighboring tree, and continuously until darkness covers all it again sings with sympathetic mellowness, '*Char-i-ty, char-i-ty, clear-it-up, clear-it-up, prove-it, prove-it!*' (Fig. 31.)

"Judged by the burden of his song, we should hold the robin to be a peaceful and generous bird,

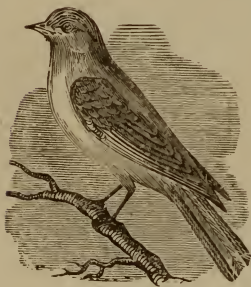


FIG. 31.—Robin Singing.

but we must state that he is very brave and very pugnacious. Let it be a hawk or crow that comes near the nesting-place, and the parent robins do not hesitate to sally out and give battle, one above and the other be-

low, making fierce darts at the intruder with such pertinacity that he is fain to retreat from the assaults. For this we shall hardly blame the brave little warrior; but when it is neither hawk nor crow that disturbs, but one of his own race, he is just as fierce for the onslaught, often with supreme selfishness snatching the half-swallowed

worm from the mouth of the other. Nevertheless, with all his faults, again I say, boys, spare the robin.

“About the middle of May there appears in our meadows a vivacious little bird, foppishly dressed in a suit of black, white, and yellow. He is full of life and whimsical freaks. He will often fly straight up into the air, pause and flutter his wings for a few moments, and then drop suddenly, lighting on the topmost branch of some weed or bush with feet far apart, swaying up and down in the greatest glee. During all these eccentric movements he is pouring forth a very torrent of song in notes peculiarly sharp and metallic, the refrain of which has given him his name of *Bobolink*. (Fig.



FIG. 32.—*Bobolink*.

32.) His mate is as plain and demure as he is foppish and garrulous. These charming birds soon spread over our meadows and extend their migrations to all parts of New England, particularly loving the rich clover-fields, where they nest and breed

amid sweetness and song, the daintiest and most poetical of our birds. The nest is placed in a tussock of grass, in which four brownish spotted eggs are deposited. But one brood is reared in a season. When the young family has been matured and is ready to take wing, a surprising change takes place in the male parent bird. The dandy doffs his gay



FIG. 33.—*Wheatear*.

suit and dons a plain brown and yellowish garb, takes the keynote of a very sober song, a simple chirp uttered at short intervals, and that mostly on the wing; and thus transformed, he would nowhere be taken for the gay bird which so adorned the summer landscape. From clover and song he passes on to gluttony and slaughter; for the next we hear of

the bobolinks, they have grown fat and are shot by thousands as the reed-bird of the Delaware to feed the epicures of Philadelphia and Baltimore. Nor is this all: they keep on their southern way, growing more and more obese from gormandizing, until they are known and killed as the rice-bird of the southern rice-fields, distinguished for nothing but grossness of appetite and fatness. For making such a sensual and groveling choice they richly deserve the fate they meet at the hands of the sportsman, and may serve as an apt warning to some other bipeds who often exercise as little wisdom in their course through life.

“In England the *Wheatear*, or *Ortolan* (Fig. 33), has a somewhat similar history, except that it does not change its habits or color; but it quits song for gormandizing, and soon gets roasted for its degrading selection.

“With the family of the blackbirds you are all very familiar. (Fig. 34.) They are found in most parts of the world, generally wearing the sombre plumage from which they derive their name. Some of the species are no mean vocalists, adding some sweet chords to our woodland melodies, for which they are always welcome and beloved, though asking a few grains of corn from the planter.

“We in America are favored with two specimens





FIG. 34.—*Blackbird Singing.*

of these birds of which we may well be proud, the beautiful *Red-winged* and the *Yellow-headed Blackbirds*. The first is found along the margins of all our

ponds and creeks, justly admired for his fine plumage. (Frontispiece, Fig. 9.) The yellow-headed variety is a habitant of the western prairies. The nests of these birds are built in trees or bushes, often placed on those whose limbs hang over the water. The nest is constructed much like that of the robin, with the same number of eggs, varied in color from bluish to brown and speckled. (Plate III., Fig. 3.)

“The blackbird is quite susceptible of being domesticated, and often becomes fondly attached to its new friends, remaining when perfect liberty is allowed. A friend of mine once had one of these birds that wandered at will in and out of doors, and was a general favorite with the whole household, including the cat and dog, often perching itself on the backs of these animals without being molested for the familiarity. It was a wonder to see Tabby, the cat, that so enjoyed a bird dinner when she could catch a wild one, eat out of the same dish with the blackbird on perfect terms of friendship, often allowing the bird to take bits of food even from her mouth, and when supper was finished walk away from her strange companion as though she never thought of devouring one of its species. (Fig. 35.)

“It is said of the common *Cow-Blackbirds* that they, like the English cuckoos, shirk the duties of rearing a family by depositing their eggs in the nests



FIG. 35.—*The Two Friends.*

of other small birds; which is no doubt true as a general characteristic, but my personal observation has convinced me that the habit is not universal.



“For two or three years a pair of these birds returned and nested near the place of my former residence. Knowing their reputation for this delinquency, I watched them the more closely, and could hardly be mistaken in my observation; and I feel bound to make this statement as a redeeming trait in their social life.

“The beautiful *Orioles* are near relations of the bobolinks and blackbirds, and are among the peculiar feathered treasures of the New World. The *Baltimore* variety stands at the head of the class for beauty and sprightliness. (Frontispiece, Fig. 1.) Black, white, orange, red, and yellow are finely blended in its plumage, while in the *Orchard Oriole* the orange and yellow are replaced by brown or chestnut red. Both of these birds are quite common in our woods and orchards, and easily become familiarized to the presence of man. They are industrious gatherers of noxious insects, and should be sacredly spared both for their beauty and usefulness. But the striking characteristic of the orioles is the manner of constructing and placing their nests. The nest is uniformly attached to the outer limbs of some tree that has strong drooping branches, as the elm, birch, or willow. It is fastened to the spray by one or more rope-like attachments, and then carried down in the shape of a pouch or pocket, with more or less depth,

according to the habits of the bird. The orchard oriole makes hers of just sufficient capacity to hold the young brood, with the opening at the top, while the Baltimore species extends hers to quite a lengthy sack. The eggs of the orchard oriole are light blue blotched with two colors. (Plate II., Fig. 9.)

“These orioles in constructing their nests use the natural fibres of the silk weed, swamp hollyhock, or bits of thread or ravelings when they can be obtained. By means of these materials they securely fix their nests to the twig, and form the outer texture of the superstructure. When this is completed, the interior is daintily finished with hair, lint, down of feathers, or other soft materials, leaving the walls of the nest with a thickness adapted to the climate in which the bird has chosen its home. In this adaptation another striking characteristic of the bird is noticeable. In the warm South the oriole seeks protection from the excessive glare and heat of the sun by placing its nest on the north side of the tree on which it builds, while in the North it is located on the opposite exposure to receive the benefit of the heat. Truly, the instincts of birds are often wonderful, fairly challenging the higher powers of reason. (Fig. 36.)

“But to the *Crested Oriole* of the tropics must be given the palm for skill in nest-building.



“This bird is not so handsome as ours, being more like our common blackbird, with the addition of a small crest on the head; but its nest is a wonder



FIG. 36.—*Hanging Nest.*

of graceful fabrication. Its form is a flexible sack of two or three yards in length, suspended to the outermost twig of some tall tree by a single

attachment. This position is wisely selected to preserve the eggs and young from the depredations of the mischievous monkeys that abound in its native woods. It is woven and platted with materials similar to those of our orioles, but differs in having the entrance through a long slit in the side. Its depth is so great that the parent bird is wholly concealed when incubating her eggs. When hatched, the young must have a rare time of swinging before they leave the nest, for, in the language of the familiar nursery rhyme,

‘When the wind blows, the cradle will rock.’

“As I see that the Baltimore and orchard orioles are very numerous in our groves, I hope we may be so fortunate as to find one or more of their nests during our anticipated excursion.

“In the family of larks the old country is far ahead of us. The vivacious sky-lark of England is justly celebrated for its singing and soaring abilities; nevertheless, we are not ashamed to present our handsome though less gifted *Meadow Lark* when an introduction to this species is sought. This cheerful bird is so common that I need not detain you by any minute description of its appearance or habits. The nest of the lark is usually built close under a tuft of grass, and is often quite roofed over, like

that of the oven-bird. The eggs are four, white and finely speckled with brown. The birds, while plentiful in our fields, are so shy and difficult to approach that the most skillful hunter may see them around him all day without bagging a single bird. The lark is insectivorous, and should therefore be exempt from slaughter as one of the feathered friends of man.

“But I see that our hour is up, and we must take leave of our beautiful pets until another occasion. Before we are dismissed, however, I wish to give notice that on next Lord’s Day a Sunday-school will be opened in this house, and I most affectionately invite all my scholars to attend. The school will be conducted by a gentleman who has recently moved into our vicinity, and who has had long experience in this work. Myself and father expect to be in attendance and give such assistance as we are able, and I shall take it as a marked personal favor to meet you all here next Sunday.”

A Sunday-school was an institution of which the children of the district knew nothing, nor were their parents much wiser in this respect.

Deacon Meachem, who was to superintend the new enterprise, was an active and well-informed retired merchant who had left the activities of the city and settled on a small farm in the neighborhood to spend

the remainder of his days with less of the care and fret of the world. Being a devoted Christian, and having been the successful head of a flourishing school in the city, he felt a desire to continue in the good work, and found a ripened field awaiting him in his new home which he was prompt to enter. In the Truats he found very willing and sympathetic associates. Nor was he slow in perceiving that Miss Truat's success had admirably prepared the way for his efforts. Confidence in the advice of their teacher and curiosity to see what a Sunday-school was, assured a full attendance on the ensuing Lord's Day, not only of the children of the district, but also of their parents.

## CHAPTER XIV.

*BLUE-BIRDS, CHICKADEES, WARBLERS, ETC.*

THE promised afternoon's ramble in the woods on Saturday was held in delightful anticipation by the children of Miss Truat's school; and when the hour of realization came, there was a full gathering of the young people of the neighborhood, cheerful with bright faces and smiles. Most of the eager excursionists had reached the place of rendezvous before the teacher made her appearance. After a brief waiting she was seen coming up the road; and a tall, stout-looking stranger with her, who was carrying a large basket on his arm. The curiosity which this event had excited passed into astonishment when the supposed unknown turned out to be none other than the poor "guardian of the birds' nests," Jim Lee, with a well-filled lunch-basket in charge. But such a change! He hardly seemed the same individual. He was fully arrayed in his new clothes, with hat and boots adorning his extremities, with form comparatively erect and manly. The left hand was no longer thrust out as a protection



against the expected blows of the rude boys; and though his face bore something of its old expression and he was heard at times to be muttering to himself, he was a marvel of transformation to the children. They could not help gathering around him with kind and curious congratulations at his altered condition. This treatment was so unusual to the poor simpleton, who had so long been the butt of their cruel rudeness, that he seemed to catch the spirit of the more humane relations which were now begun, and shook the hands of his young friends with great energy, repeating the usual ending of his salutations, "Jim knows, Jim knows."

Miss Truat watched with great interest the new relations thus established between her ward and pupils, as it relieved her mind of some anxiety on the subject. She had entertained some fears that she might have trouble should any of the boys show a disposition to continue their old treatment of Jim, which were happily dissipated by the cordial scene which she had witnessed. Turning to the children, she said :

"I am very grateful, children, for the kindly manner in which you have greeted poor Jim. His misfortunes have been great, not only from natural causes, but also from his home surroundings and neglect, and I fear that I also must add from the

rude if not cruel treatment he has received from many of the children of the district. If this has been the case, I hope it may never occur again. It is a cruel wrong and sin to add sorrows to one who has been born to misfortune. To taunt the deformed or tantalize the weak-minded is an act of unusual atrocity, and could hardly be perpetrated except by the most brutal nature if a moment's reflection was practiced. You have been acquainted with Jim all your days, and know that he is kind and harmless if left unprovoked. Denied at birth the usual strength of mental endowments, he has been sadly neglected at home, teased and tormented abroad, and it is a wonder that he is not weaker in mind and more vicious than he is. By consent of his parents my father has taken him into our house that we may have a better opportunity to try and alleviate his misfortune by correcting his bad habits, teaching him to do something useful, and awakening as far as possible the sluggishness of his mind. We have already learned that he is very grateful and readily appreciates any kindness, that he can learn to do almost anything we put him at, and performs his work with much skill. He can already repeat most of the letters of the alphabet and spell dog, cat, and some other short words, and we are very hopeful of his case. Now, what I especially

ask is that you will all try to help us in this work. If you cannot help in the direct effort of teaching Jim, do not hinder us by continued ill treatment, thus arousing the passions which we are striving to subdue. Be kind to the poor man, teach him if you have an opportunity, and I am sure you will soon take more pleasure in this course than you have in throwing stones at him or pounding his wrist until it wears the sad marks of your blows.

"I have brought Jim along to-day," continued Miss Truat, "because he knows more about the habits of birds and how to find their nests than we do. He will in this way be of great service and add much to the pleasures of our ramble. I trust hereafter that you will always treat him well for his own sake and because he is my friend."

The plain but kind admonition was not without effect, for it brought to mind sins of which nearly every boy in the company had been guilty, but which found a penitent expression in the language of young Van Gilder when he turned to Miss Truat and said :

"Miss Truat, I'm most heartily ashamed that I have ever been rude to poor Jim, and do most sincerely promise never to repeat any of these cruelties."

"Thank you, Jacob," was the reply of the teacher

“and I shall take your expression as the sentiment of the whole school.”

Soon as all things were ready for the start, Miss Truat asked what route it would be best to take for the afternoon, to which young Van Gilder replied :

“Why, teacher, you wanted one of them wagtail eggs, and so Stote and I hunted all around Dakin’s pond until we found a nest ; but as there was but one egg in it, we didn’t take it for fear the old bird would forsake the nest. That was two days ago, so I reckon there’s two or three now, and may be we can get one if you’ll go there with us.”

“Thank you, boys,” was the kind reply ; “we will go in that direction, for that is the very way that Jim seems inclined to take ; so let us be on our route. We cannot describe all the birds we shall meet during our rambles, and will therefore confine our particular remarks to some of the varieties of smaller birds, say blue-birds, chickadees, and their associates, leaving the others for notice when their turn shall come in the proper order. So we must keep our eyes open and see sharply all that comes in our way ; and we can begin at once, for here are a half dozen active little blue-birds calling to us in their sweet notes as they hop from spray to spray fluttering their wings. Just hear them ! ‘ *Purity, purity, chee-chee,*’ seems to be the burden of their song. These

birds are among the most delightful of our feathered friends, and are so well known as to need no description. They are among our earliest visitors in the spring and latest in the fall; indeed, a few of them become so attached to our latitude that they brave the terrors of our winters by taking refuge in some thicket or hedge when the weather is most rigorous. Often in mid-winter when a few warm days have occurred they come forth from these hiding-places to cheer us with a sight of their soft blue coats and silvery notes; then I give them my benediction for the space which they thus snatch from the dreariness of winter. The soft cry of '*purity*' which this bird utters as its prevailing song notes is most indicative of its character, for I know of no fault which has ever been laid to its charge. It is wholly insectivorous, and so amiable in disposition that it will be driven from its nesting-place by the pugnacious little wren rather than contend for its rights. The pair of blue-birds generally select for their nursery some deserted woodpecker's hole, hollow limb, or stump; but if you put up a house suitable for their accommodation, possession is taken at once, and they become permanent tenants, as though they understood your kind intentions. I have at this time four families thus domesticated in one house, which has been occupied for several years in this



way. So numerous had the tenants become that one family was compelled to look out for other quarters, and has actually taken possession of a hitching-post



FIG. 37.—*Little Erelune and her Pels.*

at the gate which happens to be hollow. Here they have nested and have become so tame and confidential that the mother bird remains quietly on the nest

however much the post may be used for its legitimate purpose, and both birds will pass in and out when persons are standing close by.

“Familiarized from my childhood to the company of numerous pets, I well remember with what pleasure I used to retire to a shady nook near my father’s house and spend long, happy hours with my rabbits and tame birds, and was especially delighted when I had so won the confidence of a pair of blue-birds that they would hop familiarly around me, and even alight on my head or book and feed from my hand. (Fig. 37.)

“The eggs of the blue-bird are four in number and colored like the lighter blue shades of the bird.

“But see yonder; Jim has found something, and is striving to attract our attention.”

Approaching the simpleton, who stood peering into a thick bramble that was twining around an old decayed tree, he pointed to a hole and said: “*Chick-a-dee-dee.*”

“Thank you, Jim,” said Miss Truat; “it is undoubtedly the nest of the little *Chickadee* or *Black Cap Titmouse*, which is flitting so anxiously around us, fearful that its egg treasures may be destroyed. (Fig. 38.) This bird is one of the most familiar and favorite of our feathered friends, because he cheers us the year round,

‘Merrily singing his chick-a-dee-dee.’

“The habits of this bird are much like the last named, except its winter stay in the North. He is a greedy and diligent searcher after caterpillars, moths, and other hurtful orchard pests, and should be left unharmed by the sportsman and boys. Dear little chickadees! we see them every sunny day in winter coming with the flocks of snow-birds and sparrows to pick up the small seeds and crumbs which may be thrown them, paying us with their sweet notes of song; let us ever give them a welcome and a blessing.”



FIG. 38.—Tilmouse.

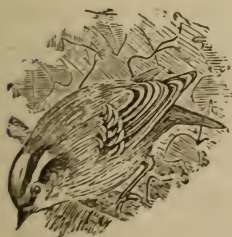


FIG. 39.—Creeper.

Passing on but a short distance farther, the attention of the party was attracted by three or four active little birds busily creeping around the trunks and limbs of the trees, uttering often repeated notes that sounded like the syllables, “*whê-chee, whê-chee.*”

“See here, Miss Truat,” inquired David, “isn’t this one of the little woodpeckers that you told us about?”

"The bird is often mistaken for one," was the reply, "but his family relations are quite different. This is a specimen of the *Black and White Creepers*, and is placed among the wood warblers. (Fig. 39.) The class seems to be a link between the creepers and warblers, as its members partake of some of the characteristics of both of these varieties. They come to us quite early in the year, and at once begin their useful service in our orchards, where they are seen running up and down and around the apple and cherry trees, searching every hiding-place for worms and their larvæ.



FIG. 40.—Warbler.

"The family of warblers is a very numerous one, and contains some of our most charming birds and sweetest singers. The species are widely disseminated both in the Old and New Worlds. Our varieties are quite uniform in size, though differing much in adjustment and color of plumage. Most of the species are shy of observation, confining their haunts to the borders of swamps and thicker groves, and



are much oftener heard than seen, which is true at the present time. (Fig. 40.) I recognize the notes of two or three varieties coming from the thicket on the borders of which we stand, and they are among the handsomest of the class, and somewhat rare. As their nests are undoubtedly near at hand, we will try if Jim's skill will not search them out."

Miss Truat called Jim, and imitating the notes of the bird, held up an egg, which he seemed at once to comprehend, and started into the bushes. While Jim was thus busied, Miss Truat gave a sketch of the bird whose song she had recognized:

"This bird is called the *Blue-winged Yellow Warbler*. The body is shaded with olive-green, the wings and tail bluish-gray, while the under parts are orange-yellow. It comes to us in May and remains until late in autumn, and is busy the whole season in destroying noxious insects."

Just at this juncture Jim's voice was heard indicating his successful search for the nest, and the whole party repaired to the spot, where they found Jim standing by a thick tussock of grass, into which he pointed, saying, "Jim knows."

Looking at the place indicated, Miss Truat at once recognized the nest of the bird named, and said, "Yes, Jim, you do know," and then called the children to come and admire the curious structure.



"Here," said she, "is a rare piece of bird architecture. It is, you see, unlike any other bird's nest which we have yet examined in form and manner of construction.

"It is in the form of an inverted cone, and the materials are not placed around in a circle, as is common with other birds, but up and down, like the frame-work of a basket. Now let us see about the eggs. Ah! here they are—five little beauties, creamy white, with rich reddish spots clustering thicker near the larger end. (Plate II., Fig. 7.) As the bird can well spare one, we will add it to our collection of gems. But there is Jim's voice calling us to another wonder."

This new discovery proved to be a *Black-throated Green Warbler*, with a nest on a low bush, on which the female was still seated. When the party approached too near, the bird dropped suddenly from the nest and fluttered along the ground, as though she would draw the intruders away from her treasures.

"Why, Jim," was the kindly remark of Miss Truat, "you are doing bravely to-day, for you have given me a real treat in finding this nest. You will notice, children, that this nest is quite differently constructed from the one we were just looking at. It is formed by using the articles of construction after the usual manner of birds. The eggs, I see, are four

in number, and about the same size and form as the one taken from the other nest just now, but it is more thickly speckled and blotched. (Plate II., Fig. 10.)

“This warbler is more common with us than the blue-winged variety, from which it differs princi-



FIG. 41.—*Nightingale.*

pally in having the blue and yellow of its plumage replaced by brown and black. The songs of these birds are rather monotonous, but soft and pleasing. There are many varieties of these birds, as the black poll, red poll, yellow, and prairie warblers, but we

must be satisfied that we have met two or three of the species in our afternoon's rambles.

"The old country has one bird of this class that excels all of ours in its powers of song—the justly celebrated *Nightingale*. (Fig. 41.)

"This bird is very plainly feathered and about the size of our robin, which it much resembles in form. In the variety and richness of its notes it almost equals our glorious mocking-bird. It has, however, a fault or two not characteristic of our peerless singer. It sings only in the evening, hence its name; and when rearing its young brood, its voice is only a rough croaking. From these considerations we should be quite unwilling to exchange our gifted songster even for this renowned Old World competitor.

"On the shores of the Mediterranean Sea a very interesting species of this family is found, called the *Fan-tailed Warbler* from the peculiar shape of its tail. Whenever the bird flies from one branch to another, this appendage is spread out like a fan, and kept as constantly in motion as is this instrument in a lady's hand. The bird is of a chestnut-brown color and very active in its motions. The nest, however, is the striking feature, as it is a marvel of skill and taste. (Fig. 42.) The birds select a thick bunch of grass or reeds, puncture the opposite edges of the leaves, sew them together by threads made from lint,

and continue the process until a little basket is formed. Into this the nest proper is placed, made



FIG. 42.—Nest of Fan-tailed Warblers.

of soft materials very daintily arranged, making a very cosy little receptacle for four pale-bluish eggs.

"The curious little *Tailor-birds* of India also belong to the family of warblers. One species of these birds takes a large leaf and neatly sews its two edges together,



FIG. 43.—Nest of the  
*Tailor-bird*.

forming a long sack to hold its eggs and young. (Fig. 43.) Another, more dainty and skillful, chooses several long, pointed leaves, like those of the willow, stitching them successively together, and suspends its nest in the pocket thus formed. These nests are always hung on the extremities of the slender twigs, to place them safe from the depredations of the monkeys and other enemies, showing the birds to be gifted with great prudence as well as skill. (Fig. 44.) Surely none but an all-wise Creator could so wonderfully

endow such tiny creatures. These bird gifts are but parts of his wonderful works.

"But I see that we have no time to talk about foreign birds, however curious may be their habits, for here are scores of our own flitting all around us, chirping and singing as though jealous because we neglected their charms for those of their alien competitors. Having so many varieties to notice, we will



confine our attention to the families more immediately connected, leaving the others to come in their order.



FIG. 44.—*Tailor-bird and Nest.*

“First, there are several varieties of the *Fly-catchers*, at the head of which stands the *King-bird* or *Bee-martin*, so familiar to you all. He is a beautiful but quarrelsome little fellow whose bravery is less questioned than his habits. Be it hawk or crow, jay or shrike, the king-bird attacks with equal fearlessness, nor does he desist from the conflict until the intruder is driven well away from his haunts.

“Like all the fly-catchers, the king-bird captures

its food on the wing, and bears the reputation of making sad havoc among our cherished honey-bees. But even if this is true, we can hardly afford to lose him from our fields, where he destroys ten hurtful insects for every bee that goes into his crop.

“Ah! here is the sweet little *Pewit* or *Phebe-bird*, always welcome as one of our earliest spring visitors. Harmless and social, we could well spare more gaudy birds. But listen! those low and plaintive notes are those of a cousin of the phebe-bird, the shy little *Wood-pewit*, seldom seen but constantly heard in our groves of pine. Its notes have such a melancholy sweetness as to awaken the tender sympathies of every listener, but there is a general mistake as to their import. They are not notes of mourning for a lost mate, but the warm breathing of love poured into the ears of a living one. We often misinterpret nature from want of careful observation.

“The *Great-crested Flycatcher* is a somewhat rare bird in our vicinity, but I have noticed one or two specimens this season. As its name imports, it has quite a large crest on the head, but is not gaudy. It is shy and courageous, much resembling the king-bird in its habits. The nest is generally placed in holes constructed of leaves, grass, and feathers, but is peculiar in almost always having one or more cast-off snake-skins woven into its texture. Four or

five eggs are deposited, of a deep cream color thickly scratched with brown and purple tints, as though laid on by a pen. (Plate III., Fig. 7.)

"The handsomest of this order of birds is the *Vermilion Flycatcher*, found only in the extreme southern parts of our country. Its wings and tail are black, with pale edgings, while the rest of the plumage, including the full globular crest, is a bright scarlet or vermilion." (Plate I., Fig. 5.)

At this juncture the party had reached the borders of the pond where the boys had discovered the wag-tail's nest, which Jacob immediately pointed out. It was built in a small excavation under a moss-covered log, and so securely hidden that nothing save careful searching could have found it. Much to Miss Truat's delight, it now contained three eggs, one of which was added to the growing collection. (Plate III., Fig. 8.)

As there was a soft grassy knoll and a clear spring of water near by, here the whole party rested from their rambles, while Jim's well-filled basket was emptied of its contents, and a delicious little pic-nic enjoyed. When this was over, the children romped on the grass or gathered water-lilies from the pond with a zest and gentleness which showed the wonderful transformation that had taken place in the community of young Arabs. The occasion, like the

visit to the Truats, awakened a new train of ideas and a sense of delight to which they had been utter strangers. They found that they could be happy without being rude or vicious, and acquire knowledge with real pleasure. Their respect and love for their kind and thoughtful teacher was greatly increased as they were thus taught how constantly she sought their improvement and happiness.

After a suitable time had been allowed for these pleasant recreations, Miss Truat again called the attention of her pupils by saying :

“It is now about time for us to be looking homeward, and we must leave many birds which we have seen for future description ; hence I shall only call your attention to those we may meet on our way home, and give you their names, which I hope you will remember when I recall them. And now, one thing more before we part : I hope you will all remember the Sunday-school which is to be opened to-morrow. The school is started for your benefit ; and if you have become convinced by my method of teaching and my manner that I am your friend and desire to make you happy, be assured that the Sunday-school has the same object in view, only in a higher sense. For your own good and as a personal favor to me, I hope you will all be present to-morrow.”

## CHAPTER XV.

### *THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL.—NUTHATCHES AND SPARROWS.*

SUNDAY morning opened bright and beautiful ; and when the hour for organizing the Sunday-school arrived, there was a full attendance of the children of the district, with not a few of the older persons, attracted by the novelty of the occasion. Conspicuous among the crowd was poor Jim, whose wonderful transformation in outward appearance and improvement in manners excited great curiosity and remark. At a proper time Deacon Meachem stated the object of the meeting and proceeded to organize the school. The greatest difficulty encountered was a lack of properly-qualified teachers ; but by giving a large class of the older boys to Miss Truat and the girls of corresponding age to her father, the main obstacle was overcome. The chosen superintendent was an adept in holding the attention of the young, and was, withal, a good singer, of which ability he made the best use in conducting the school. This part of the exercise had a peculiar



attraction for Jim, whose ear seemed to be marvelously sensitive to music. He was an adept in catching up snatches of the words and tunes, and would be constantly crooning them over to himself. On this occasion he was especially taken with one of the hymns, always a favorite with the lovers of sacred psalmody in the earlier days, the refrain of which was at once so full of the truth of the gospel and expressive of Christian fervor :

“Oh, the Lamb, the loving Lamb!  
The Lamb on Calvary;  
The Lamb that was slain, but liveth again,  
The Lamb who died for me!”

The hearing of this strain by the simple-minded Jim seemed to supply the place of the old ditty, which his new instructors had taught him in a measure to forget, but not being able to retain the whole stanza, “See-saw, dickery daw” gave place to a brief paraphrase, thus :

“Lamb on Calvary,  
Lamb who died for me.”

This rendering became the burden of his song, which was repeated almost constantly when employed in various ways about the house or passing about the neighborhood.

In addition to the usual exercises of the Sunday-

school, Deacon Meachem, who was gifted as a lay preacher, gave an earnest exhortation, presenting the great needs of the soul and the fullness of a Saviour's love to meet its eternal wants. The fullness of the attendance and the marked attention given to the instructions of the day so encouraged the friends of the movement that they felt justified in giving notice that preaching might be expected each Lord's Day after the school had closed its session. This notice was the result of a consultation between him and Doctor Truat, in which it was agreed to secure the services of some of the nearest ministers, for at least one sermon on each Lord's Day, and thus in some measure supply the religious wants of the community.

The experience of the day was hopefully encouraging. The children were orderly and attentive, while among the older ones there was evidently much serious reflection. It was peculiarly gratifying to Miss Truat to notice that David and some others of his more immediate friends gave very marked and serious attention—an indication which she hoped and prayed might result in a true realization of a Saviour's grace.

On Monday morning, when opening her school, Miss Truat sought to deepen the impressions made in the Sunday-school, and read for the purpose the

first twelve verses of the twelfth chapter of Luke, and then said :

“Children, you see what a God you have to deal with. He numbers the hairs of your heads; knows all your most secret thoughts; marks all you do; and will bring everything into the light, though you may seek ever so carefully to hide your ways from him. Let me, therefore, affectionately forewarn you whom you should fear. If you will love and confess him on earth, he will accept and acknowledge you in heaven. You should never forget how kind and careful he is, and how impressively he tries to make us understand this. The little sparrow that costs but half a farthing he never loses sight of, but cares for it and feeds it, and with such an illustration of his minute benevolence to insignificant animal life asks the question most tenderly and impressively, ‘Are ye not much better than the fowls?’ Ah! to forget such infinite love and kindness, even though we may be in the divine mind more precious than the fowls, makes us less deserving than they are. That you may be led to a wiser choice and a better life is the great aim of all my efforts in your instruction. I am trying to make God’s works and ways pleasant to your eyes that you may be induced to give your hearts to the blessed Jesus. So, when we talk about the little sparrows this after-

noon, I wish you to remember that the gracious Saviour used them also for the express purpose of winning your love and confidence; and I shall repeat the beautiful lesson to little purpose if you are led no farther than to admire the bird, while the beneficent Redeemer is wholly unnoticed and forgotten. Hoping for better results, let us now turn to our lessons."

During the ordinary routine of the day, Miss Truat did not fail to notice with gratification that the lessons of the Lord's Day and of the morning had produced a thoughtful sobriety, indicating that her pupils were beginning seriously to ponder the path of their steps.

When the hour for the special lesson had arrived, Miss Truat called attention by remarking:

"In our rambles on Saturday we observed two little birds, not uncommon in our fields, which deserve a brief mention before they pass out of mind: I refer to the *White-bellied* and the *Red-bellied Nuthatches*. These pretty little visitors are often mistaken for the downy woodpecker, which they much resemble in appearance and habits, but the conformation of the toes at once shows the difference. These birds appear early in spring, and at once begin their busy and useful service in our gardens and orchards. Their notes are few, being rather a chir-

rup than a song. They nest in holes, mostly selected, though sometimes originally made, and deposit four eggs of a pinkish-white color, beautifully speckled, the red-bellied variety being somewhat the less in size. Here are specimen eggs of the two varieties. (Plate II., Figs. 11 and 12.)



FIG. 45.—*Chipping Sparrow.*

“ But now let us turn to the dear little sparrows. If they can attract the notice of the divine Father, they are certainly worthy to receive some notice from us. These familiar birds are found in most parts of the world ; and though among the plainest



in feathered adornments, they have ever been general favorites. They vary less in size and habits than they do in plumage and the range of their song notes. Among our birds we have quite a large list of sparrows, some of which are justly noted for their musical abilities and gentleness of disposition.



FIG. 46.—House Sparrow.

“In this small picture of the *Chipping Sparrow* we have the typical bird. (Fig. 45.)

“This cheerful little friend comes to us early in March and remains until November, often venturing to stay all winter, especially if the season is mild. In New Jersey and Southern Pennsylvania this is quite common, as it appears in these locations almost any sunny day during the year.

This bird, with the *House Sparrow* (Fig. 46), will become very tame and social if it is fed a few times



FIG. 47.—Feeding the Sparrows.

at the same spot—an experiment which I often made in my young days. Seated on a favorite bank near our gate, I would scatter a few seeds and crumbs,

and down would come my pretty pets and pick them up from my very feet, now and then looking up into my face with a soft chirrup, as though thanking me for the kindness. (Fig. 47.)

“The nest of the chipping sparrow is built in some low bush or clustering vine, where four bluish-green speckled eggs are laid. (Fig. 48.)

While the female bird is sitting she becomes very gentle and confiding, allowing persons to approach within a few feet of the nest without being disturbed. I have a nest at this time



FIG. 48.—Chipping Sparrow's Nest.

built in the branch of a fir tree that projects over a rustic seat which I often occupy in the evening, and so near that I can reach it when seated. But there little Mrs. Sparrow sits looking demurely into my face, as though she enjoyed my company, as I surely do hers.

“The *White-throated Sparrow* or *Peabody-bird* is easily distinguished by the black and white stripes over the head, and its white throat. It is also noted

as being one of the sweetest singers among the sparrows, having quite a variety of soft, musical notes which it delights to pour forth evening and morning with great vivacity, sometimes continuing its song far into the night, from which fact it has been called the American nightingale. Its nest is placed under a low, thick bush, and is formed of grass, moss, fine roots, and hair. Four grayish-white eggs are deposited, thickly marked with confluent blotches of different shades. (Plate III., Fig. 11.)

“The *Field* or *Hedge Sparrow* is one of the handsomest of the tribe. (Fig. 49.) The crown is a



FIG. 49.—*Hedge Sparrow.*

shade of red extending down the back; beneath it is yellowish white, with two white bands across the wings. It is a summer bird with us, and much like the one last named in its habits.

“The *Song Sparrow* closely resembles those already described. It is very common; but preferring the close thickets, it is not often seen, though always heard with delight.

“Being very social, the sparrows usually congre-



gate in small flocks of a dozen or more, in thick clumps of bushes or hedgerows, where they delight to warble away the hours as they flit about with great contentment. When disturbed by some intruder, they scatter quickly to hide in some other covert, where they soon renew their chatter and melodies.

“But now we come to a darling little bird, loved not so much for its beauty or its song, but because it has compassion on us when it sees the other birds turning away from the approaching bleakness of our winter, and comes to fill up the gap which their departing leaves—the cheery little *Tree Sparrow*. This bird is only a winter visitor with us, coming in October, as other birds are departing. True, it loves the swamps and thickets, not often venturing from its hiding-places, except when a severe snow-storm makes a visit to our barn-yards and haystacks necessary. At such times they generally come in small flocks, whose persistent twitter makes their presence inviting. In forming its nest the tree sparrow uses mud and straw, like the robin, to shape the exterior, lining it with soft down and hair. Five grayish-blue eggs are deposited, blotched with two shades of red and brown. (Plate II., Fig. 8.)

“But last, though not least, either in number and interest, are the lively little *Snow-birds*, generally



allowed to be the most numerous class of all our small birds. Travel where you will, from Maine to Florida, and you will hardly pass a day or a dozen miles without meeting these pretty little friends, often in large numbers. Like the tree sparrow, they tarry with us all winter, hiding in the hedges and thick evergreens during the severe weather, but returning to hover around the farmhouses and barns as soon as it moderates. They particularly delight to make their appearance after a light, fleecy snow, tracking it over with their dainty footsteps. At such times they can be enticed into great familiarity by scattering a few waste crumbs for their benefit. It was one of the favorite amusements of my dear brother to watch, after a winter's storm, for the snow-birds to make their appearance, and from the same window from which we interviewed the robins in summer he would scatter his crumbs, until by degrees he had enticed them to feed from the very sill of the window. (Fig. 50.) In this way quite a flock would often be seen feeding there together, much to our delight. It was a childish amusement which has never lost its relish as I have grown older; and even now the dread of winter is much lessened by the anticipation that it will bring with its chill and snow my little flock of snow-birds to chirrup and feed around my window.

“To share in my brother’s benefactions the little tree sparrow, and occasionally a chipping-bird also, would come to the window, and then we had a lively time of chirruping and flitting, and occasionally a



FIG. 50.—*Making Friends with the Snow-birds.*

little sparring also between the different varieties of birds, in which it was evident that the tree sparrow was oftener to blame.

“In some parts of the country the opinion is quite general that the snow-bird of winter is the chipping sparrow of summer; but it is wholly a mistake. The birds are entirely distinct, and remain so. The proof of this is in the fact that they are found mingling together at all seasons of the year; and further, that no one has ever found them in the transition state, which certainly would have occurred if the change ever took place, as in the case of the transformations of the bobolink already noticed. It is a singular fact in animated nature that birds of the same size, physical conformation, and texture of feathers should be so differently affected by changes of climate. But going no farther than the family of sparrows, we find this remarkable fact strikingly illustrated. Twice a year varieties of the same family pass and repass each other as the seasons change, some going south, while others are seeking the north; some basking in warmth and sunshine, while others are delighted to flit among the snow-flakes or to nestle in the snow-laden branches of the thickets. Among those which choose the latter surroundings, none are more cheerful under their bleak allotment than the cheery little snow-bird. Innocent, modest, and social, let us ever give it a warm welcome, with an open hand to supply its small wants when the rigors of winter shall make us

grateful that a richer and more liberal hand is graciously opened to 'give us our daily bread.'

"The snow-bird makes its nest sometimes in a hollow stump, sometimes beneath a tuft of grass or in the thick bushes, using grass, leaves, and other soft material for its construction. The eggs are four, grayish-white, and spotted. (Plate II., Fig. 13.)

"Plentiful and familiar as the sparrows mostly are, all attempts to domesticate them as cage-birds have met with but partial success, and have always seemed cruel to me, and quite unnecessary. Surely it is more pleasant to behold them free and joyous, hopping round our homes, singing their gladsome songs, than to mark them pining in a cage, ruffled in plumage and uttering only fretful cries. The only bird which I ever see in captivity without feeling a commiseration for its condition, coupled with a strong desire to act the part of the generous-hearted sailor of whom I told you, is the pretty little *Canary*, a dainty foreign cousin of our sparrow. This bird, born and reared in the groves of its own island, would undoubtedly partake of the love of freedom characteristic of our native birds; but those which we have are descendants of long lines which have known no other world than the limits of their cages. This process seems to have changed the nature of our canaries, so that they love the circum-

scribed habitation in which they are nurtured. Give them unrestrained liberty, and they are at a loss how to enjoy it. I have several times given my canaries their freedom; but they would manifest great uneasiness; and when their cages were opened and placed within their reach, they have seemed gladly to return to their native bondage. (Fig. 51.)

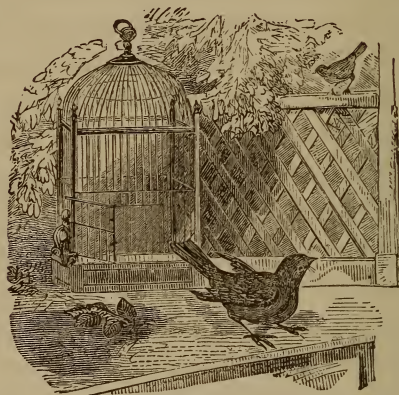


FIG. 51.—*Returning Home.*

“The canary, as its name imports, is a native of the Canary Islands, where it is still found in its wild state; but there it is not the bright yellow bird which we have in our cages. In its native groves it is a dappled olive-green, with more or less of black and yellow in its plumage. But beautiful as the canary may be, its chief glory is in its incomparable songs.



It cannot imitate all manner of sounds, like our peerless mocking-bird, but in the variety and sweetness of its melodies it surpasses all known birds. There seems absolutely no limit to the range of notes which a well-trained male canary can produce. It will begin with a single chirrup or two, while it hops from perch to perch with a little flutter of the wings, like the blue-bird, and then launch off into a prolonged and most musical trill, running through the notes of the scale, dwelling rapturously on each, before it ends the cadence. To increase the vocal ability of the canary various means of instruction are resorted to, as birdpipes, organs, and the tuition of adepts in imitating bird voices; and this sweet little pet manifests great aptness at improvement and well repays the time and attention bestowed upon its education.

“And now, as our allotted hour has expired, having noted the sparrows, as enjoined by our morning Scripture reading, let us not fail to look beyond the birds and comprehend that which is more beautiful than their forms and sweeter than their songs, the ‘beauty of holiness’ and the ‘song of salvation.’ That you may all wear the one and sing the other is the great aim of all my teaching and the burden of my prayers.”

## CHAPTER XVI.

### *FINCHES, TANAGERS, CROSSBILLS, ETC.*

THE unflagging interest manifested in Miss Truat's bird lessons, and in the beautiful paintings illustrating them, always secured an anxious waiting for the hour of their resumption, and a full attendance of earnest listeners. The pleasure enjoyed seemed to increase with each interview as the minds of her young auditors became more and more awakened to the beauties of the subject and skillful in comprehension. It was with a hearty reciprocation of enjoyment that Miss Truat renewed the interviews as often as circumstances would justify, having found it inexpedient to do so daily after securely getting the fixed attention of her pupils on the more direct studies of the school. After this advance had been made, one or two special lessons a week sufficiently kept up the interest in the subject.

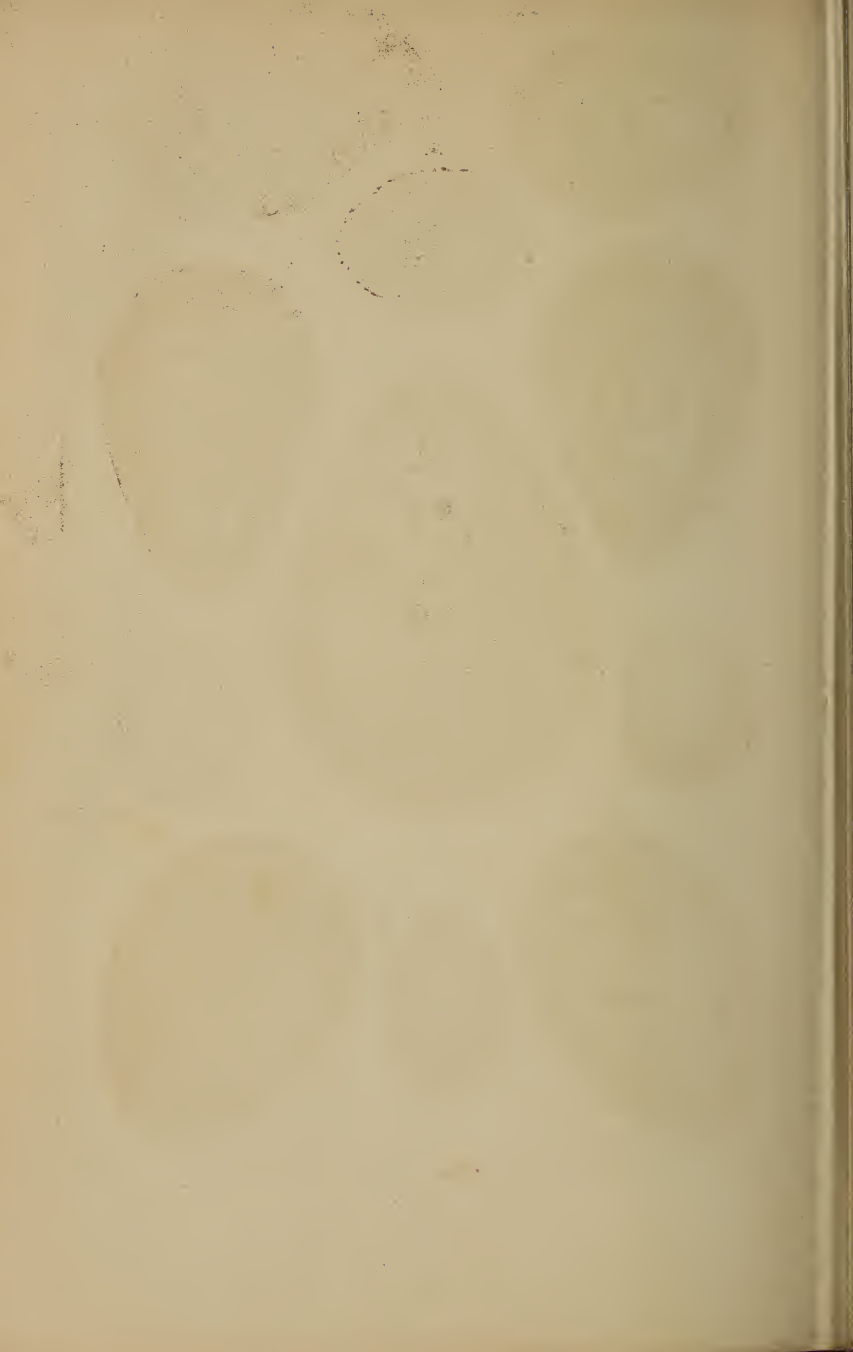
When the next suitable hour had arrived, Miss Truat renewed the discussion by saying :

“ We have now reached the largest class of birds found in North America, and indeed the most numer-



1. Least Tern.
2. Virginia Rail.
3. Rusty Blackbird.
4. Wilson's Snipe.
5. Killdeer Plover.
6. Kitterwake Gull.

7. Great-crested Flycatcher.
8. Water Thrush.
9. American Woodcock.
10. Wilson's Tern.
11. White-throated Sparrow.



ous known among birds—the *Finches*. The average number of birds found in any given locality removed from the seacoast, allowing for exceptional cases, will be about two hundred, of which a larger share will belong to this than to any other species. They have a great variety of form and plumage, but are distinguished from other *Insectores* or perching birds by a short, conical bill, in most cases with more or less curve in the points of the mandibles, especially in the upper one. We saw several members of the family during our recent excursion, which I promised to describe on a suitable occasion, and now will redeem my pledge.

“And, first, let us notice the beautiful *Purple Finch*. (Plate I., Fig. 3.) This very handsome bird is of a prevailing crimson hue, more or less splashed with a dusky color on the back and wings, growing lighter on the belly until it is nearly white. This finch is quite abundant, and a favorite everywhere. The nest is usually built in pines and cedars, and in it are deposited four or five bluish-green eggs with spots and streaks of black. It is but proper to add that this finch, like most of the species, has rather a bad reputation from its habit of cutting off the buds and flowers of our fruit trees; but in so beautiful a bird we can pardon some small faults in order to retain its pleasant visits to our groves.



"The *Lazuli Finch* is in marked contrast to the one just described, being of a rich blue on the back and neck, with reddish-brown breast, fading to a white underneath, with two white bars across the wings. (Plate I., Fig. 8.) This beautiful bird is found only on the Western plains and shores of the Pacific. The *Painted Finch*, found in the Southern states, differs from the lazuli in having the under parts intensely red, while the back and wings are glossed with golden green, forming an exquisite combination, and rendering the bird among the most brilliant of its species.

"Our American *Goldfinch*, *Yellow-bird*, or *Thistle-bird*, as it is variously called, is a charming and well-known visitant to our fields, and needs no careful description, as you see it daily in going to and fro. (Plate I., Fig. 10.) It flies with an undulating motion, all the while repeating its soft notes, which sound as though it said *chee-chee! chee-chee! wee-che!* The favorite place for the nest is in the forks of the apple tree or elm. Four eggs are laid, bluish-white, and nearly oval in form. When the thistle seeds are fully ripe, small flocks of these birds can be seen busily engaged in pulling the downy fibres from the head and feasting on the seeds.

"The *Goldfinch* of England differs from ours, particularly in having a band of crimson at the base of

the bill, while the color of the body is largely composed of grayish-brown. The nest of this trans-Atlantic bird is a model of skill and neatness, as you will see by this specimen which I have brought to show you. (Fig. 52.)



FIG. 52.—*Goldfinch's Nest.*

“The most noted of the English species is the well-known *Bullfinch*—not because it is distinguished for its beauty, but mainly for its susceptibility to domestication. In its native state it is quite shy and secluded, but it easily becomes familiarized as a captive, and has shown great capability of education.

Here is a pair of these birds which I drew while they were engaged in building their cosy nest. For this purpose they seek some hidden covert in a bramble bush or close thicket, and then they both work with great industry until the task is accomplished. (Fig. 53.)



FIG. 53.—*Finches Building Nest.*

“The *Chaffinch*, a beautiful picture of which I have to show you, is a common bird over most of Europe, and is called by the Germans the ‘Noble Bird.’ (Fig. 54.)

“The male bird is deep black on the forehead, the rest of the head and neck being ashy-gray, brown on the back, passing into a rich red on the lower parts of the body, and this fading into white on the abdo-

FIG. 54.—*Chaffinch.*

men. The wings are marked by two conspicuous white bars.

“The finches are all more less musical and attractive birds, and are useful in reducing the swarms of



noxious insects. It must not be denied, however,



FIG. 55.—*Finches at Play.*

that they are justly chargeable with the offence of destroying the young buds and flowers of our orchards, often to a most ruinous degree. We should hardly want to spare them altogether from our woods, hence we will cherish the hope, even though it amounts to self-deception, that they do more good than harm. Let us still give them a warm welcome, take pleasure in their play (Fig. 55), and endure without grumbling the small ills which they may inflict upon us.

“You all remember, during our rambles the other Saturday, with what admiration we gazed upon the beautiful red bird with black wings and tail. It was the *Scarlet Tanager*, one of the most gaudy summer visitors. Specimens of this bird are plentiful in



all the states in the warm season, and present a most charming appearance as their bright red forms are seen flitting among the green foliage. The bird is a sweet singer, the notes being much like the robin's, with the addition of a sort of ventriloquism, by which the singer seems to be located in quite a different place from that whence his voice really comes.

"The *Louisiana Tanager* is only a little less brilliant than the scarlet variety. The head is crimson, shoulders and breast bright yellow, with back, tail, and wings black, two white bars crossing the latter. It is abundant on the Pacific coast, where I painted the specimen which I show you. (Plate I., Fig. 7.) The well-known and pretty *Redstarts* belong to this family.

"The *Cedar-bird*, I notice, is not uncommon in our groves and orchards, and so it needs no formal introduction and description. There is much prejudice against this bird on account of its well-known fondness for cherries, mulberries, and other small fruits; and he does help himself rather liberally, but a careful examination would, I have no doubt, leave the balance in his favor. The cedar-bird is particularly fond of one of the worst pests of our orchards, the canker-worm, and can be seen for hours devouring these depredators on our treasures.

“A more dainty member of this class deserves some special mention, the *Cardinal Red-bird* or *Grosbeak*, occasionally seen on the banks of the Hudson, and becoming more plentiful as we go toward the South, where they are very numerous. The male bird is a rich rosy red, with a conspicuous crest of the same gaudy color. As you saw my live specimen when you paid me a visit, you will concur in the general admiration which is ever bestowed on this splendid bird. The song is exceedingly loud and clear, prolonged through many bars, and then dying away with a gentle cadence. From his beauty of plumage and richness of song the red-bird has been much sought after as a cage-bird; but the condition is always unnatural to him. He hops and flies about his prison to its utmost limits, and changes his free, glad warblings to a sharp and fretful chirrup. Like the cedar-bird, he is very fond of small fruits, haws, and cedar berries, and can always be found in the late fall and winter near any of these latter trees whose boughs contain the tempting fruit. Being a winter denizen from the Hudson southward, these birds are often seen on the borders of the thickets, from whose recesses their notes are heard on every sunshiny day, sounding so sweetly amid the dreariness of winter as to secure for the singer the name of Virginia Nightingale.

"The *Blue Grosbeak* is an inhabitant of the Southern states, and is so shy as seldom to be seen near the abodes of men. Rarely one has been found as far north as our latitude; but the *Rose-breasted*, a much handsomer bird, is not uncommon among our arboreal visitors. The head, neck, and upper parts are black, the rump and under parts white, while the breast and under wing coverts are an exquisite carmine or rose-red. Of shy habits, like its blue compeer, it is not as often seen as one could wish.

"But now let us take a look at one of the most conspicuous members of the finch family, both for beauty of plumage and pecu-



FIG. 56.—Crossbill.

liarity of conformation and habits—the *Crossbill*. Here is a fine specimen of these birds which I drew from nature. (Fig. 56.)

“What first attracts us as most characteristic about these birds is the singular conformation of their bills, from which peculiarity they derive their name. You will observe that each mandible is long, curved, and sharp-pointed. If the two points were brought close together and made to touch, the mouth of the bird would be held wide open, but this is not the manner in which they are adjusted. In closing the bill the points pass each other, and are seen projecting above and below, making literally a *crossbill*. This is the only class of birds which have this arrangement; and it is but another instance showing how an all-wise Creator adapts means to ends. The crossbills are winter birds, and make their abodes among the groves of pine and hemlock, on whose cones they mainly subsist. In opening these burs and detaching the oily seed, the beautiful adaptation of the crossbill is seen. With equal facility they cut open an apple or a pear and extract the seeds, of which they are very fond. With these handy instruments they can also open many of the softer nuts, as the pecans, hazel-nuts, and beech-nuts.

“We have two species of the *Crossbills*, the *Red* and *White-winged*. The first is mostly a dull red,



with wings and tail of blackish-brown. This species is the most common with us, reaching our latitude about September, and remaining until April, when they move farther north. They are, however, seldom seen, as their resorts are the thick pines and hemlock swamps. Those who live near these wilds are sometimes favored with the visitation of large flocks, especially when deep snows prevail, as they seek the barn-yard or haystack to eke out their scanty fare. At such times they are remarkably tame and can be easily caught, which is often done, as they have quite a value as pet birds, in which state they manifest many of the traits of the paroquets. They can suspend themselves by the upper mandible; and hold their food in the claw while extracting the desired morsel. They possess, however, none of the parrot's capability of vocal imitation. The nest of the red crossbill is built in the forks of some pine or hemlock limb, where four eggs are deposited, greenish-gray in color, with reddish-brown spots and lines. (Plate II., Fig. 6.)

"The *White-winged Crossbill* is much the handsomest variety, as you will see by this beautiful picture which I have made of one. (Plate I., Fig. 11.) The general color of the plumage is a rich carmine red, fading to white on the lower parts of the belly; tail and wings black, with two broad white bars



across the latter, from which the bird derives its name. Unfortunately, this handsome bird is too uncommon among us. The eggs are five in number, very pretty, being white, marked with yellow spots.

“There is a class of very pretty little birds found only in America which partake of some of the characteristics of the finches and of some of the fly-catchers; hence they have been classed with both of these orders, but have finally been considered worthy of a distinct place of their own. The bill is that of the finch, so we shall do no violence to let them stand as cousins to the order. They are known as *Vireos* or *Greenlets*. There are about seventy varieties in the family. The general color is a bright olive green, with a mixture of blue in some and yellow in others. The *Red-eyed Vireo* is the most common among us, and is a charming bird and a sweet vocalist. It is constantly seen around hedges and thickets and in the tops of the elms and other shade-trees in our towns and cities, flitting in and out, peeping here and there with shy curiosity. The song of this bird is varied, sweet, and plaintive. It is somewhat late in nesting, seldom beginning before about the middle of June. The nest is a rare specimen of skill. It hangs like that of the Baltimore oriole, and is constructed of strips of bark, pieces of wasps’ nests, caterpillars’ silk, and other similar ma-

terials, all woven together and made strong by an unctuous saliva which the bird uses. It is in the form of a basket, and is a model of neatness. The only nest that I know of which surpasses it in grace and art of construction is that of the *Baya*, a small East India bird. (Fig. 57.) The nest of this bird-weaver is made as compact as felt, with a long rope-



FIG. 57.—Nest of the *Baya*.

like neck, which is attached to the limb by a skillful knot. The entrance and exit are by two holes in the bottom of the nest. The apartment for the brooding process is in the centre of the structure, making as dainty a house as a little bird may ever choose to enjoy.

“The *Warbling Vireo* is an occasional visitor with us, and a charming songster; then there are the *Solitary*, the *White-eyed*, and the *Yellow-throated* varieties, which we must pass without special mention, though well deserving a full description.

“The Eastern world has some members of the finch family which have peculiar claims for our admiration, among which the *Social Grosbeak* stands conspicuous. This bird is an inhabitant of Africa, where its huge clusters of nests have always excited the wonder and admiration of travelers—an experience which I can most certainly verify, as I saw few things, when visiting that section of the world with my father, that more astonished me. The bird itself is small and brown in color, much like one of our sparrows, and is in no wise particularly attractive, but the nests are marvels of size and construction. A colony of these birds select a large spreading tree—generally one of the acacia variety, a tree which yields the gum Arabic of commerce—and then they obtain a species of long, tough, wiry grass which grows near by. This they fasten together at the top of the limbs and let the nest hang down, like the thatch on a Dutch barn or the roof of an English cottage. The fibres are more or less woven together, making the structure strong and safe. This process is repeated until sufficient dimensions are obtained;

then the nests proper are placed under this broad roofing, each pair of birds having a separate apartment.



FIG. 58.—Colony of *Social Grosbeaks*.

(Fig. 58.) As the bird will not use the same nest a second year, every season a new series must be

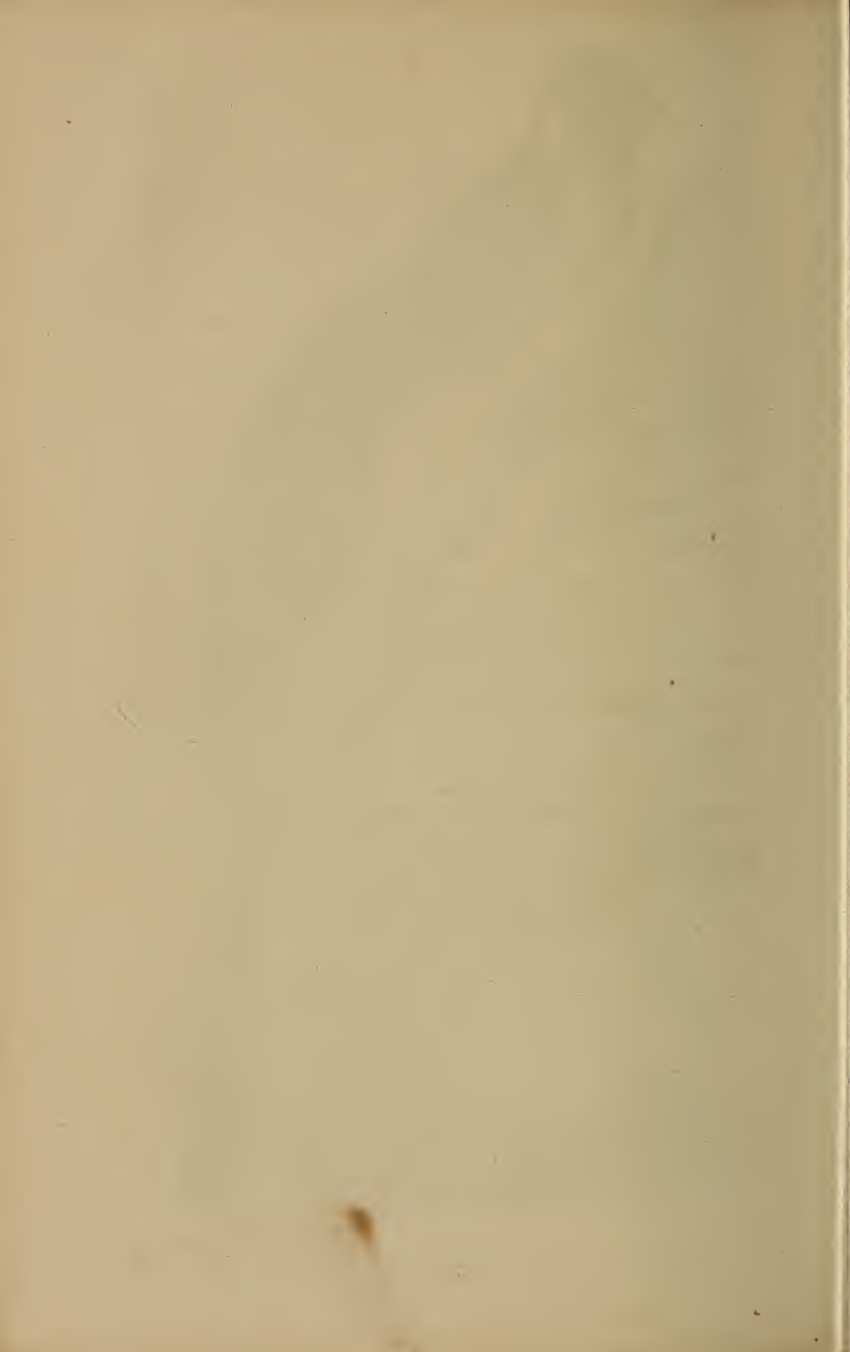
added; and as the colony is constantly increasing in population, the whole tree in a few years is surrounded by an immense thatching. Indeed, these bird habitations have sometimes been mistaken for the abodes of man, so nearly do they resemble the grass houses of the natives of the country when seen at a distance. The drawing I show you was painted from a colony found near the Cape of Good Hope, and is true to nature.

“There are several other varieties of the weaver-bird in Africa, but the only other one which we shall particularize is most remarkable for the surprising length of its tail. It is generally known as the *Widow Bird*, but quite erroneously, the true name being the *Paradise Whidah Bird*. (Fig. 59.)

“This bird is about the size of the common sparrow, but has, as you will notice from my drawing, the bill of the sparrow and a tail that no other bird is adorned with. The prevailing color is glossy-black; a rich reddish-brown collar passes around the neck and extends down by the shoulders, while the abdomen is pale buff. But the grand adornment of this bird is its magnificent tail. There are two immensely long and broad central feathers, curving to the point, and two shorter ones above, which swell out like a fan when extended, and then suddenly contract to mere stems. The plumes are set ver-







tically, and have a rich, glossy, velvety lustre. This justly admired bird has been largely imported into England and France to adorn the aviaries of the curious and wealthy, and with some show of success, as young broods have been raised in confinement. But, like most birds, it loses much of its vivacity when in captivity. Indeed, it is said that when it loses its beautiful tail feathers during the moulting season, or as a consequence of its unnatural condition, the bird seems to feel the deepest chagrin. Instead of indulging in its usual active pastimes, skipping about and spreading its gaudy plumes, it seeks the lowest perch or backs itself into the farthest corner, and there sits, dumpy and cheerless, as though ashamed of its altered and humbled condition.

“But now we must say good-bye to the pretty finches, and to one another, as our pleasant hour has expired.”

## CHAPTER XVII.

*SWALLOWS, MARTINS, WRENS, HUMMING-BIRDS.*

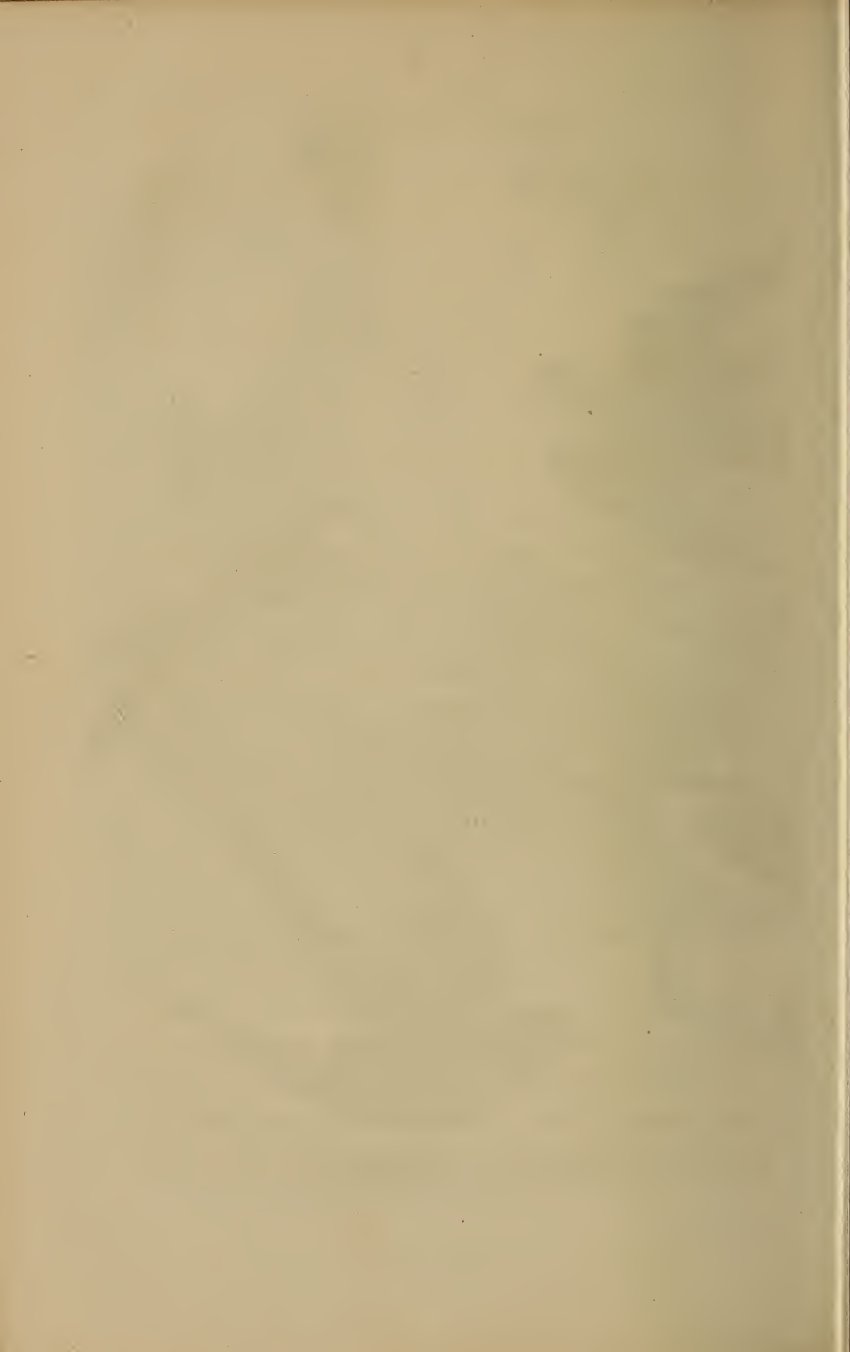
“THIS afternoon,” said Miss Truat, when resuming her special lessons, “we shall devote our time to some birds with which most of you are very familiar; and, first, the swallows and martins will claim our notice, and well they may, for they have taken possession of our schoolhouse chimney and hung their nests under its gables. They are also thickly colonized in the sand-banks bordering the pond we visited the other day, and are constantly flitting through the air and skimming the surface of the water. Wherever we meet them they are delightful visitors, pleasing with their chatter and graceful vivacity. A summer landscape would be deprived of much of its beauty were it wanting in its group of swallows. (Fig. 60.)

“These beautiful and useful birds were favorites in olden times, making the abodes of men their chosen resorts, and venturing even to visit the temple where Jehovah made his dwelling-place, and resting upon his altar without offending him by









their touch. 'The sparrow hath found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of hosts.' Every mild climate has its group of swallows during some part of the year, and every favored land most cordially unites in the song :

'Give welcome to the swallows,'

and feels a regret as the season comes

'When the swallows homeward fly.'

"We have our full share of these beautiful birds, most of which are so common that they need no elaborate description.

"The well-known *Chimney Swallow* differs essentially from the other varieties ; indeed, it is placed by some writers in quite a different class. It is regarded as a swift, and stands near the tanagers, mentioned in a former lesson. The tail is not elongated, as with the true swallow, nor is the plumage so glossy.

"These swallows spend but a small portion of the year with us. Sometimes in the early part of May they suddenly appear in great numbers, and disappear as abruptly the last of August or first of September. In their native wildness the chimney swallows roosted and nested in hollow trees or small caverns in the rocks. Audubon, the great bird

artist, gives such a graphic sketch of this habit that I cannot resist quoting it:

“‘I found the tree to be a sycamore nearly destitute of branches, sixty or seventy feet high, between seven and eight feet in diameter at the base, where the stump of a broken hollow branch, about two feet in diameter, made out from the main stem. This was the place at which the swallows entered. On closely examining the tree I found it hard, but hollow to near the roots. It was now about four o’clock in the afternoon, in the month of July. Swallows were flying over Jeffersonville, Louisville, and the woods around, but there were none near the tree. I proceeded home, and shortly returned on foot. The sun was going down behind the silver hills, the evening was beautiful, thousands of swallows were flying closely above me, and three or four at a time were pitching into the hole, like bees hurrying into their hive. I remained, my head leaning on the tree, listening to the roaring noise made within by the birds as they settled and arranged themselves, until it was quite dark, when I left the place, although I was convinced that many more had to enter. . . . Next morning I was early enough to reach the place long before the least appearance of daylight, and placed my head against the tree. All was silent within. I remained in this posture probably twenty minutes,

when suddenly I thought the great tree was giving way and coming down upon me. Instinctively I sprang from it; but when I looked up to it again, what was my astonishment to see it standing as firm as ever! The swallows were now pouring out in a black, continuous stream. I ran back to my post and listened in amazement to the noise within, which I could compare to nothing else than the sound of a large wheel revolving under a powerful stream.'

"A truly interesting sketch," remarked Miss Truat, when she had concluded the reading, "and it forcibly shows us what wonders a close observer can find when others see nothing to attract attention.

"The *Hirundo*, or swallows proper, are quite as interesting. Of these the *Barn Swallows* are the most familiar, as they swarm around our houses and barns, under the eaves of which they build their curious nests of mud and straw. The *Cliff Swallow* is much like the last named, but differs in its habit of building its nest in the crevices and under the juttings of rocky cliffs.

"The three classes of swallows we have named all observe one very interesting custom. When the time for southern migration arrives, a great excitement is observable. Great flocks of swallows will gather on the roofs of house or barn, chatter

and flap their wings, then start off and make two or three wide circles, and then alight again. This they will repeat for a day or two, then rise *en masse* on the wing, turn southward, and are seen no more until the following spring, leaving loneliness and

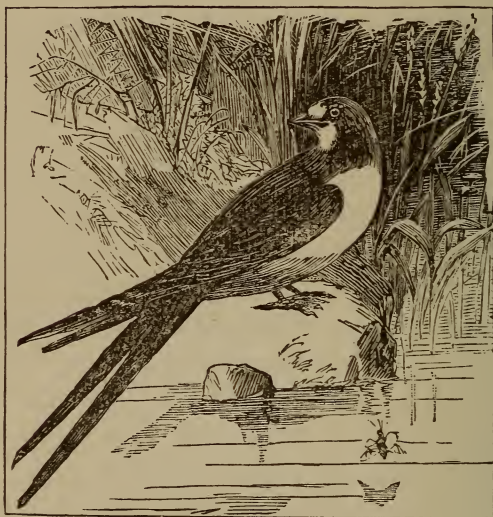


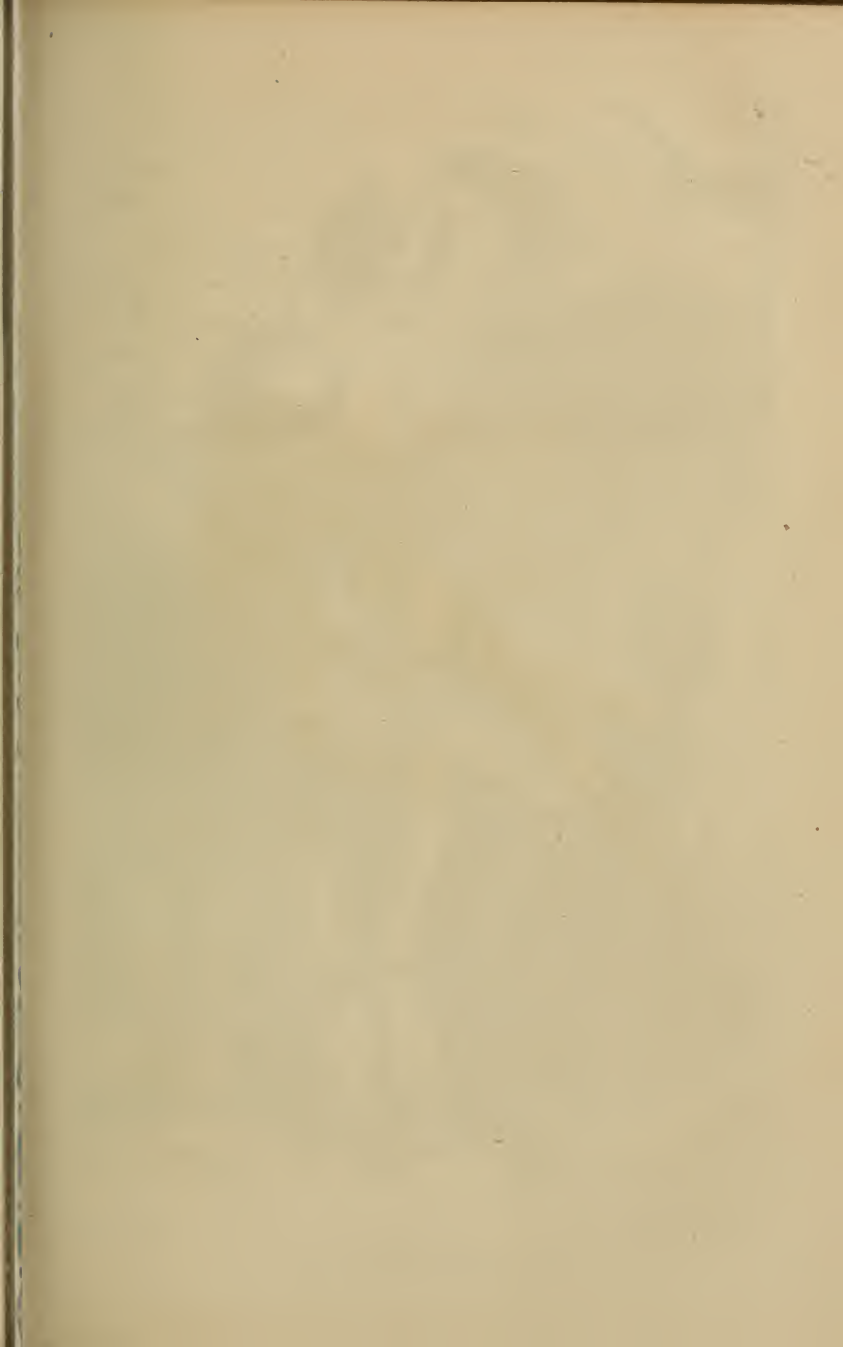
FIG. 61.—*White-bellied Swallow.*

silence where but a moment before all was noise and activity.

“The *White-bellied Swallow* is a species which we see so numerous around streams of water. (Fig. 61.)

“The *Bank Swallow* is the smallest of this species







in America. It has a habit, peculiar to itself, of excavating its nesting-place in some sand-bank on the borders of a stream or pond, after the fashion of the king-fisher. This receptacle is carried to the length of two or three feet, and then a small chamber is formed in which the nest is placed, this being formed of grass or other soft materials. These holes are sometimes so numerous as to perfectly honeycomb the bank, and then present a busy and interesting scene. The eggs of all the swallows are very similar, being generally oval in form and white in color.

“I am sorry to have to confess that in my young and thoughtless days I was guilty of assisting at the robbery of one of these bank nests, my little brother and another bad boy getting the eggs, while I spread my apron to receive them. (Fig. 62.)

“It has always been a peculiar source of pleasure to me to watch the flight of the swallows, the swiftest and most graceful on the wing of all our birds. At times we mark them sailing through the air high above roof and steeple. A few tremulous motions of the wings, and then away they float in long, graceful curves, carried forward as if by some hidden propulsion. (Fig. 63.) Turn to the bright, smooth surface of the pond or lake, and there the bank and white-bellied swallows are skimming over the sur-

face, now and then dipping into the water as they snatch the insects from their liquid abode. (Fig. 64.) How graceful! how joyous! That observer must be hard to please who cannot find exquisite

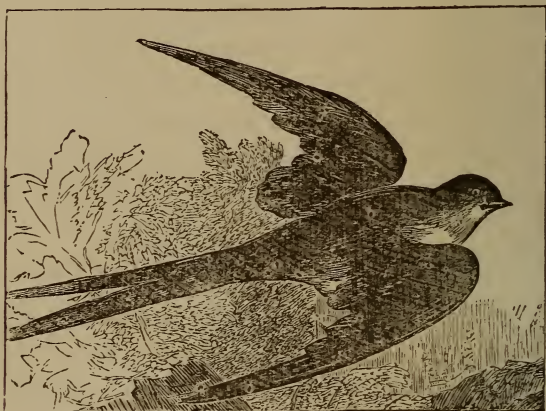


FIG. 63.—*Swallow on the Wing.*

enjoyment in such rich contemplations, and dull indeed must be the senses which fail to be attracted to scenes like these. Of such it can be truly affirmed, 'having eyes to see, they see not.'

"The *Esculent Swallow* is an inhabitant of the Island of Java. This bird is noted for the peculiar material of which it constructs its nest. No sticks, grass, or other such articles are used, but a curious gelatinous composition partly an animal secretion



and partly of certain glutinous seaweeds. This unctuous material is glued to the face of the cliffs, where it is shaped into the required form, and soon hardens.



FIG. 64.—*Swallow Skimming the Water.*

When freshly made, the nest is nearly transparent, becoming somewhat yellowed when used by the bird. When placed in water and allowed to soak for some time, the nest dissolves into a jelly-like mass, in which state the Chinese prize it very highly as one of their luxuries. From a taste of the article, I am perfectly willing that the Celestials should enjoy a



monopoly of the trade. It may do for those who can appreciate cats, rats, and puppies, but to a civilized appetite it is simply disgusting.

“But we must not forget to mention the little *Purple Martin*, one of the most social of our birds, busy little colonies of which are seen around our barns, dove-houses, and tavern-signs where the landlord has grace enough to build a house for its accommodation—an act of kindness which even an Indian does not forget. Often in passing the Indian villages there will be noticed the gourds and hollow logs which have been put up for the use of the martins. This consideration for the birds has led me to form a more favorable opinion of the tribes than I should otherwise have done, for that heart is not all savage which is softened by the presence of a little bird, and would win its stay by giving it a dwelling-place. Our little friend, the martin, is a brave warrior, like his cousin, the king-bird. It will fearlessly attack crow, hawk, and even the eagle, and with such vigor that this king of the birds is fain to beat an inglorious retreat. The crop of the martin must be of a peculiar texture, as it feeds on wasps, bees, and large beetles, whose stings and jaws it does not seem to feel. In swiftness of wing, manner of breeding, and migration the martin differs so little from the swallows as to require no special mention.

“But we must say good-bye to the swallows, for the little wren which has built its nest in the gable of our schoolhouse is singing as though it would attract our attention, in which it certainly has succeeded.



FIG. 65.—*House Wren.*

We welcome the return of this little pet of our door-yards as gladly as that of the swallows, for they are both harbingers of sunshine and fragrant flowers.

“The *House Wrens*, as the name suggests, delight to dwell near the abodes of mankind. (Fig. 65.) If they find appreciative friends who will provide for their needs by putting up suitable boxes, gourds, or any hollow receptacle, they enter at once into possession, paying by their tinkling little songs for the favor. If they can find no better provision for housekeeping, they take possession of a knot-hole in the weather-boarding, crevice in the wall, an old teapot, if hung up, or an old hat stuffed into a broken window. I have known of one instance where a pair of wrens actually made their nest in the sleeve

of a coat which had been left hanging for a few days; and when the garment was finally put on, the poor disappointed wrens followed the wearer about for some time, unwilling to give up their squatter rights to the garment. This tiny bird is waspish in its disposition, and very courageous. An instance of this came recently under my notice. Not finding a place which suited their fancy for nesting, a pair of wrens resolved to oust a family of blue-birds from a box set up for their use; but the rightful occupants were not willing to yield their mansion to the intruders, and so resisted. It was a struggle of two days' continuance. When the blue-birds left the apartment, the wrens took immediate possession, and would resist all attempts of the rightful owners to re-enter; but no sooner did necessity compel the wrens to go abroad than the blue-birds would re-entrench themselves in their stronghold, and in turn keep the assailants out. After two days of successive victories and defeats, the wrens changed their mode of warfare. When again in possession, one remained inside to keep the blue-birds out, while the other brought sticks and other material, with which they barricaded the entrance, making the aperture so small that the owners could not enter; and thus they gained their point, leaving the disinherited birds no alternative but to look elsewhere for a hab-

itation. Still, notwithstanding all their faults, we cannot spare the wrens, with their cheerful melodies, useful habits, and pretty ways.

"The *Short-billed Marsh Wren* (Fig. 66) is a pretty black and white striped bird, inhabiting our marshes and tall reeds, among which it builds a tasteful hanging nest. The place of entrance is in the side, just below the largest diameter of the nest, like the baya's nest which I showed you the other day.



FIG. 66.—*Marsh Wren.*

"There are several other varieties of these birds, as the *Long-billed Marsh Wren*, *Winter Wren*, *Carolina Wren*, and *Golden-crested Wren*. This last (Fig. 67) is a beautiful little creature, and belongs, perhaps, among the kinglets, rather than where it is generally located. Its prevailing color is olive-green, with white, black, orange-red, and yellow about the head, and bars across the wings of the latter color.

"It is one of our daintiest winter birds, and gifted with a great many pretty and cunning ways, as the following account will show. It is given by a lady of great skill in observation. The lady had a number of pet birds so tame that they could pass in and out of their cage at pleasure, often making excur-

sions into the fields and groves, and curiously returning with large numbers of wild birds, of which habit she says :

“‘ During very cold weather they brought home nightly a party of hungry wild birds to share with themselves the hospitality of the aviary ; sometimes

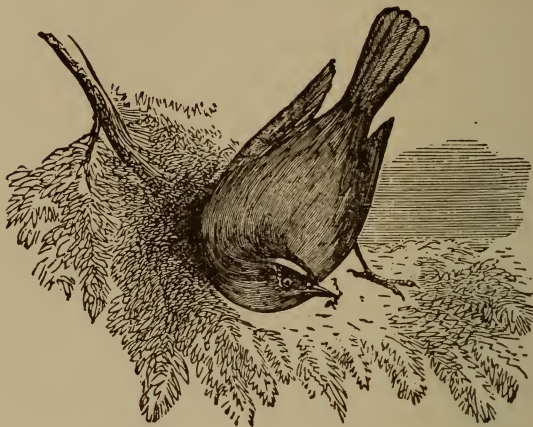


FIG. 67.—*Golden-crested Wren.*

their guests would number nearly two hundred, and it was really quite astonishing to see the quantity of bread, barley, and fat meat that these little beings would dispose of. In this assembly most of our small birds had representatives, and among them were two golden-crested wrens, who were the first to reach and the last to quit their good quarters.

“‘ Whilst they honored us with their company



they ruled the whole bird community, and what they could not achieve by force they would accomplish by stratagem. For instance, if one of these tiny creatures took a fancy to a piece of meat to which Mr. Jackdaw had helped himself, and which he was holding down with one foot while he pecked away at it after the dawish fashion, this mite of a bird would jump upon the jackdaw's head and attack the eye that was situated on the side of the occupied foot. The poor daw, not quite understanding what had gone wrong with him, would lift his foot to scratch his tiny tormentor off his head, when in an instant the coveted morsel was seized by the daring thief. If the daw were unwise enough to follow, vainly hoping to recover his property, the wicked wee thing would get upon his back, where he knew himself to be safe, and the poor daw was forced to content himself with other fare.

“If, after selecting a piece of meat, the wrens were left to themselves, they would leave the larger birds and retire to a quiet corner, where they would both peck amicably at the same piece; and if the meat happened to be tough, one of the wise little things would hold it fast in its little bill, while the other would pull a morsel off, and then the one that had eaten would perform the same kind office for his friend. Before the winter was over there was not a

bird in the aviary that did not give way to the two little kinglets, and they always went to roost upon the backs of some other birds; I thought that they did this to warm their feet.'

"Charming little fellows!" added Miss Truat, when the sketch was finished; "who would not take a gratified peep at them after such an account of their feats?"

"The nest of these cunning little birds is also quite a curiosity, as you can see by the drawing which



FIG. 68.—*Nest of Golden Wren.*

I show you. (Fig. 68.) It is pensile, daintily fabricated, and so placed among the foliage as to be nearly concealed from view. This wren comes to us from the north in September, and returns in April, spending most of its time among the evergreens; hence it is not as often seen as it could be desired.

"Most curiously, some writers have included one

species among the wrens which seems to be wholly out of place in the family. I refer to the beautiful *Lyre Bird* of New South Wales. (Fig. 69.) From



FIG. 69.—*Lyre Bird*.

this drawing of the bird you will observe nothing of the wren about it, but will, no doubt, admire its magnificent tail, vieing with the birds of paradise in splendor of plumage.

“Following the descending scale as to size, but the ascending as to marvelous splendor of plumage and daintiness of form, we come to the family of *Humming-birds*, an order wholly confined to the New World. Nearly five hundred varieties of these little feathered gems have been classified, only about half a dozen of which are found in the United States. South America and the West Indies are the

countries where the numbers and glories of the order culminate. None of the humming-birds are larger than a lady's thumb, while the *Vervain Humming-bird* of Jamaica is the tiniest feathered creature known, not being larger than a humble-bee. (Fig. 70.)



FIG. 70.—*Vervain Humming-birds.*

“This wee feathered mite is not only celebrated for its beauty and tiny proportions, but also as the only member of the family gifted with any vocal powers. In this fact we have a striking proof of God’s superintendence and wisdom in the bestowal of his gifts. Where he has given great beauty of plumage he has denied the capacity of song, and bestowed it



upon the plainer races of thrushes, sparrows, and their kindred.

“In viewing the large varieties of humming-birds we can hardly conceive of any daintiness of form, splendor and brilliancy of color, or gracefulness of motion that do not find their ideals in the make-up and movements of these marvels of creation. Their bills are like needles, straight, curved, or hooked; their colors sparkling, varied, and brilliant as a collection of the rarest gems; their motions when darting away with the hum and directness of a bullet, or hanging over the cup of a flower, with wings moving so rapidly as to seem invisible, alike astonish and enrapture the beholder.

“The variety mostly seen in our latitude is the beautiful *Ruby-throated Humming-bird*, and though far behind some of the order, is nevertheless worthy of the admiration which it receives. It has a splendid gorget of ruby, which a little change of angle con-



FIG. 71.—*Humming-bird.*



verts into emerald green, passing into velvety black, and thus with every change passing through a succession of transformations brilliant and pleasing as the mutations of the kaleidoscope. There will be the flash of a bullet and almost its whistling sound,



FIG. 72.—*Humming-bird Moth.*

a little chippering voice, and you will see suspended under some flower a dainty little form with the bill thrust into the cup, and the princely *Ruby-throat* is before you. (Fig. 71.) It is there but a

moment, however, for with another flash and hum it is gone. The unobserving have often mistaken the *Humming-bird Moth* (Fig. 72) for the real bird, but the double wings, insect legs, and flexible proboscis should prevent any one but a blind man or a dullard from making such a blunder.

“Of all these gaudy little creatures the most brilliant is perhaps the *Fiery Topaz Humming-bird*, found on the Upper Amazon. The prevailing color of this peerless bird is a blazing scarlet, the head and neck velvet black, throat emerald green with a patch of crimson in the centre, the lower part of the back and tail-coverts green, with orange gloss, and the wings and tail purplish black. Add to this gorgeous combination of colors that peculiar iridescence strikingly seen in the plumage of humming-birds, and the wondrous beauty of this little creature will be admitted as almost unapproachable.

“The *Columbian Thornbill* is also a charming little bird. (Plate I., Fig. 6.) It is mainly a rich golden green, with a splash of blue on the wings, whose lower feathers, with the tail, are a rich glossy bronze. On the throat is a tuft or gorget marked with green, red, and purple.

“But it would take many hours to describe even a small portion of this gorgeous class of minute birds, and so we must let them pass, only adding

that the forms of their nests are almost as varied as the birds themselves. They are built in holes, resting on the branches, and pensive; they are shallow, pocket-like, rude, or elaborate, according to the tastes and instincts of the minute architect.

“South America may add to its splendid list of birds the small family of *Todies*, of which the *Green Tody* is the most brilliant. (Plate I., Fig. 2.) It is about the size of the wren. Its throat is bright ruby, back green, with yellow under-plumage. The bird is sluggish and seldom takes wing; hence it is often called the *Ground Parrot*.

“If the old country cannot boast of its humming-birds, it has a class which charmingly fills up the gap in its attractive *Sun-birds*. They are minute in size and brilliant in plumage. From the peculiar sparkling hues of their feathers they derive their name. Varieties are found in Africa and India and in many of the adjacent islands, of which Java has its full share. Here is the picture of one which I made when visiting this island. (Fig. 73.) It has something of the humming-bird bill; the general color is a shining steely-purple, with under-feathers of olive-yellow; the throat is chestnut, with a bright violet streak running from the mouth to the breast.

“Here, dear children, we must close our delightful interviews until after our summer vacation. If

FIG. 73.—*Javanese Sun-bird.*

your interest has equaled mine, you will anticipate their resumption, after six weeks' intermission, with no ordinary pleasure. Nor will this sentiment be confined to our special bird lessons. In all our

school-duties I have found a daily enjoyment in having under my charge such an affectionate and apt class of scholars. When I came among you, it was with fear and trembling, owing to reports which had come to my ears; but to-day, dear pupils, as I dismiss you for a few weeks, I do it with no sense of relief as escaping from a disagreeable task, but with a feeling of deep regret that it will be so long before I meet you all again in such pleasant intercourse. Hoping to see you all at least once a week at our Sunday-school, and, finally, on the resumption of our school in the fall, I bid you all an affectionate good-bye."

When Miss Truat closed her remarks, it was with wet eyes, which found sympathetic tears in all her pupils, who passed around her, the girls for a parting kiss and the boys to grasp her hand for a good-bye shake. When in the street, young Chivers said:

"Dave, this is rather a different ending to our school from what we expected, isn't it?"

"I should think it was," responded the whilom leader of assaults on teachers, whose eyes were not yet dry from the parting scene; "and it kinder strikes me that it's a slight improvement on the old style."

"Well, I should think so," was young Van Gilder's remark. "Crying over the parting from a



teacher is rather different from fighting with one to drive him away; but the thing is so, that's a fact, though just how it has been done I can't hardly make out."

"Well," was Dave's reply, "I think I begin to understand the matter. We've had a teacher that has some *heart* as well as *head*, and depends more on the power of kindness than the toughness of hickory rods; and though we are bad enough and dumb enough, we are not such big fools as not to understand the difference."

"I believe that's just it, Dave," responded Stote; "and that makes true what the superintendent said in the school last Sunday, that 'Love would conquer where force was powerless.' If Miss Truat had tried rulers and whips, she'd a-been hustled out of school in no time; but she loved us, and we're clean whipped out."

"Well, for my part," said Jacob, "I'll take just as many lickings of that sort as she or anybody else is a-mind to give; and I tell you, lads, it's the only kind of fighting I'm a-going to do hereafter."

"I'm with you there," responded David.

"And I too," added Staughton.

And off they ran, striking illustrations of the conquering power of the principle they had just named.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### *CROWS, BIRDS OF PARADISE, JAYS, NIGHT- HAWKS, ETC.*

THE success which had attended Miss Truat's school was the wonder of the neighborhood. Even Miss Yost, who had ventured to return from her visit to her grandmother's, was compelled to confess that for once she had read the tea-grounds in her inverted cup amiss, consoling herself, however, with the remark,

"Well, you know, the best of folks are sometimes mistaken; but I was mor'n half right, arter all, for I did see the big owl and some strange conjuration works; and I should like ter know if Miss Truat's doings ain't kinder curious? Why, sure as you're born, there's witchcraft in them proceedings, only the wicked one don't push her on't it. But, gracious me, they's marvelous, marvelous!"

Miss Truat had, indeed, worked marvels, but in such a way as to gladden the whole community. She had corrected one of its greatest evils, and thereby removed one of its greatest social dangers, by avert-

ing the downward course of the juvenile population of the district and turning their feet into the ways of wisdom.

During the six weeks' vacation until the first of September the Sunday-school grew in numbers and interest, while the more direct religious services held after its session gave encouraging promises of good. A deep and thoughtful seriousness pervaded the community, largely shared by the older pupils of the school. The anxious, tearful sowing of Miss Truat's mission was soon to give place to joyful reaping.

The feelings of the children of the district were quite different from those generally entertained. They had been accustomed to look forward to the opening of the school with thoughts anything but pleasant; but now the moments moved too tardily, so great was the pleasure of the anticipated reunion with their beloved teacher and a resumption of their studies.

When the glad event arrived, there was a full attendance to greet their loving teacher, with faces far more pleasant than the scowling looks which first met her gaze when first coming among them. With quickened minds to deal with, and with no fears of rebellious spirits to overcome, the work of instruction was resumed with an animation and pleasure unknown when she commenced her task.

In opening her school, Miss Truat read part of the seventeenth chapter of the First Book of Kings, with reference to the special lesson of the afternoon, and then fervently prayed that her young charge might be the same peculiar objects of the divine care as was the persecuted prophet, and be fed by the richer Bread that came down from heaven to give life to the world. After this devout exercise, the appropriate lessons of the day were resumed with great earnestness.

At the proper hour Miss Truat took from her well-filled portfolio a beautiful painting of Elijah fed by ravens, which at once attracted the attention of the school. (Fig. 74.)

"In this picture, children," she began, "you will see an attempt to illustrate the Scripture lesson of the morning. The venerable prophet Elijah is here receiving the bread and flesh which the Lord commissioned the ravens to furnish him night and morning while he tarried by the brook Cherith, when the famine prevailed in the land because of the wickedness of the people.

"In this striking incident we have the assurance that while God is punishing a land for its guiltiness he will always provide a way of deliverance for those who love and serve him. 'When the wicked are cut off, the righteous shall see it.'



FIG. 74.—*Elijah Fed by Ravens.*

“With the *Raven* thus presented to us, we cannot refuse to give him some attention. This bird is generally placed at the head of the *Corvidæ* or *Crow*



family, and has its representatives in nearly all parts of the world, though but few of them are found with us.

“The raven is jetty black, and is not easily distinguished from the crows proper except by its superior size. With no striking personal attractions, the raven has always been a favorite as a pet bird, notwithstanding his mischievousness, because of his knowing, cunning ways and the strong attachment he forms for his friends. The bird is a rare visitor with us, and having no particular points of admiration, comes and goes without exciting observation except from a few.

“The *Common Crow* I need not describe, as he is well known to every child, but we must say a few words respecting his character. Ever since the crow was known a jury has been sitting on his case, and has not yet agreed upon a verdict. About half say, ‘Guilty,’ while an equal number say, ‘Not guilty.’ He eats hurtful grubs, but he steals corn. He kills noxious vermin; yes, and young birds also, and is an insatiate poacher of eggs. Thus the jury bandy charge and counter charge, and all the while the crow is crying, *caws, caws*, as though he understood that his case is in chancery, and therefore will never be cleared from the docket. One careful observer has made out a very plain case against the

crow. According to his calculations, he destroys the eggs and young birds of insectivorous species that would consume ninety-six times as many hurtful insects as the crow would devour, and he is therefore to that degree injurious. Being somewhat a convert to this theory, I have ceased to shed any sentimental tears at the death of a crow.

"The *Fish Crows* are found mostly along the sea-coast and bays, where they are exceedingly numerous, as on the Delaware and the Chesapeake. Here in the winter-time they can be seen by thousands on the bare shores when the tide is out, picking marine insects and snails, or floating on cakes of ice watching for any stray scrap that may be thrown overboard by the ship's cook. At night they resort *en masse* to some favorite grove of pines for a roosting-place, where they keep up a fearful din until a late hour. The crows all build an unsightly nest of sticks in some tall treetop, in which four eggs are deposited, greenish and blotched.

"The *Rook*, *Jackdaw*, and *Magpie* belong to the family of crows. All these birds are easily tamed, the magpie being an especial pet, notwithstanding that he evinces a waggish propensity to steal spoons, spectacles, or any other small thing which he sees constantly in use. He seems to enjoy the perplexity experienced in hunting for the lost articles.

“By careful training crows and magpies have been taught to imitate a few words of speech, but they are not sufficiently apt in learning to justify the pains required to accomplish even this partial success. The cunning of the crow is proverbial, as is abundantly seen in the fact that, though they are around by the thousand, the gunner has to use the utmost caution to get even a chance shot at one, while a wagon can pass within a few rods of a flock without causing much alarm. Crows are omnivorous and greedy, feeding to repletion on almost everything which they can find, from carrion to comfits; but they are capable of living on a very scanty diet, until it is no straining of a metaphor to say, ‘poor as a crow,’ for to be poorer it would be necessary to remove the skin from the bones.

“Passing through the tufted *Philippian Crow*, the *Umbrella Bird*, and the *Scarlet Crow*, the transition is not so far-fetched from our plain, sombre birds to the gorgeous *Birds of Paradise*, which are near relatives. These unequaled plume-birds are inhabitants of New Guinea and adjacent islands. No description can do justice to their splendors; and when we look at them, we can hardly become so subdued in our admiration as to note down accurately their magnificent adornings. I have some paintings of these feathered wonders which I will place before

you, and your eyes will give you a better idea of their dazzling beauties than any language of mine could do. Here is the gorgeous *Emerald Bird of Paradise* (Fig. 75), confessedly standing at the head of this splendid family.



FIG. 75.—*Emerald Bird of Paradise.*

“If we did not see the marvelous reality, it would be difficult to imagine any combination of plumes and colors so exquisite. The prevailing shade of the upper part of the body is a rich chocolate brown;

the front a deep velvety green, at one moment changing into black and then flashing forth with glittering emerald. The neck is golden green and yellow. But the most wonderful adorning of this peerless bird is the splendid flowing mass of soft, graceful plumes forming the tail, brilliant as the glittering rain from an exploded rocket. White, gold, orange, soft purple, and red blend in forming the main colors of this appendage, but with every slight motion they melt into each other and sparkle with a brilliancy indescribable. Add to this a peculiar grace of form and movement, and the claims of the bird for pre-eminence will not be disputed. This is the variety of the class most sought after for the cage, and on account of its plumes; hence the natives are diligent in hunting its native haunts.

“There are several other varieties of these birds; but having feasted our eyes on the chief beauty, we will let the rest pass, and notice one of a somewhat different class, but of almost equal splendor of plumage and a native of the same countries—the *Twelve-thread Plume-bird*. (Fig. 76.) Only look at this exquisite bird. Its general color is a cream violet, becoming lighter or changing almost to black as the light strikes it at different angles. Around the neck is a collar of glowing emerald green, the feathers standing boldly out, forming a superb ruff.



The tail is a mass of white, flowing, fleecy plumes, from twelve of which are long thread-like prolonga-



FIG. 76.—*Twelve-thread Plume-bird.*

tions curling gracefully, from which the bird takes its name. In looking at these marvels of creative

beauty, it is not surprising that the idea of paradise was at once suggested as a fitting name.

“But passing from the heights to which a contemplation of these peerless birds has led us,

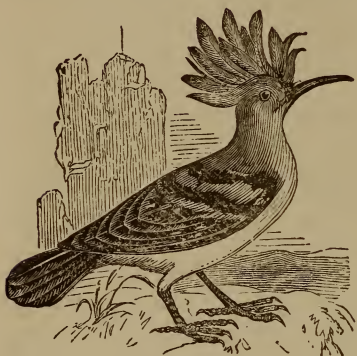


FIG. 77.—*The Hoopoe.*

we may take the *Hoopoe* (Fig. 77) in the way, in order to break the suddenness and force of the fall. A not ungraceful form, with subdued black, white, and buff colors, the hoopoe has only the gaudy crest

of the plume-birds; this adornment is of a reddish buff, with each feather tipped with black. It is an Eastern bird, but makes occasional visits to Europe, where it is prized for a cage-bird and for its usefulness.

“But returning from our foreign wanderings, a noisy native bird, the *Blue Jay*, is admonishing us of its presence by its shrill cry of *jay! jay! jay!* (Plate I., Fig. 4.) Abundant and noisy everywhere in warm weather, we need not stop to set forth its attractions, for such it has when looked at only to admire its blue and black coat with white trim-

mings; and I would that truth and justice did not compel me to stop to present a bill of indictment against him. But the fact is the jay is a villainous murderer of young birds and destroyer of the eggs of the useful species. I have no words of clemency to urge in his favor. He can be spared, and the sooner the better, and so can his cousin the *Shrikes*, or *Butcher-birds*, and most appropriately named. These birds not only kill smaller species to supply their real wants, but slaughter them just for the pleasure of it. Sometimes one of these feathered butchers will dart at a flock of sparrows or finches and kill three or four before they can escape, and when done with his useless murder suspend his bleeding victims on the sharp spines of the locust or thorn. It is fortunate that they are not plentiful, and it will be no misfortune if they become less so.

“But we have a small class of very interesting birds called *Goat Suckers*, or more properly *Night Jars*, which we must not pass without notice. The former name was given from a mistaken notion that these birds were accustomed to suck the milk of the animals whose name they bear. The belief was wholly without foundation, and could only result from careless observation or great credulity, akin to the regard for witchcraft or the zodiacal signs. These birds are of plain plumage, being of various

shades of brown more or less mottled and striped, bearing no little resemblance to the hawks. But their striking peculiarities are in the conformation of their bills and feet. The head is broad and very much flattened, bill small and triangular when viewed from above, with an enormous gape which passes below the eyes, with a curious appendage of bristles. The feet are extremely small, and the birds have a habit of sitting lengthwise of the perch instead of grasping it with the toes.

“The most numerous species with us is the *Nighthawk* or *Bull Bat*, the bird which we now hear and can see high in the air flying with a graceful motion. Come into the open air, and let us watch him for a few moments, and we shall likely see him perform the peculiar feat from which he gets his secondary name. There! mark him as he plunges from his high elevation, shooting down like a meteor with a prolonged booming sound. His wings are nearly closed and he seems about to be dashed to pieces on the ground, but how skillfully he makes a short upward curve and returns to his former altitude, to repeat the plunge again in a few minutes! It is an odd habit, and naturalists have not agreed as to the purpose of the bird in the performance.

“The *Whip-poor-will* is a well-known but seldom seen member of this family. There are but few sec-



tions of our country where this bird is not a visitor at some period of the year, and his odd monotonous cry is familiar to every youth; but perhaps not a dozen are seen during all the season. He is strictly a nocturnal bird. In the daytime he remains carefully concealed and inactive, either hidden in some covert or clinging close to the ground, whose general color he greatly resembles, so that one must almost step on the bird before it will make any movement, and thus reveal itself. The bird has a habit of occupying some particular spot when it begins its evening cry; but if sought for by merely following the voice, it will prove a hunt for a needle in a haystack. When you have by careful approaches fixed upon the very spot whence the voice comes, and are sure that you are but a few feet from the bird, you find that he has been practicing upon you a feat of ventriloquial deception, for the suppressed tones of his cry will reach you from a quarter quite outside of your imagined circle. In this way he will keep any one but an experienced observer running here and there on 'Tom-fool's errand,' until he is willing to give up the hunt from want of success. But no sooner do you turn from your defeat and leave the victor to his secrecy and song than most provokingly from the very centre of the circle around which you have so carefully searched comes once



more his tantalizing challenge of *whip-poor-will*, *whip-poor-will*—that is, if you can catch him. Sometimes he will take his position on your very wood-pile or on the corner of the garden fence, and play you a rare game of hide-and-seek as you try to discover his whereabouts even there. Shy as he is, and monotonous as is his song, the whip-poor-will ever

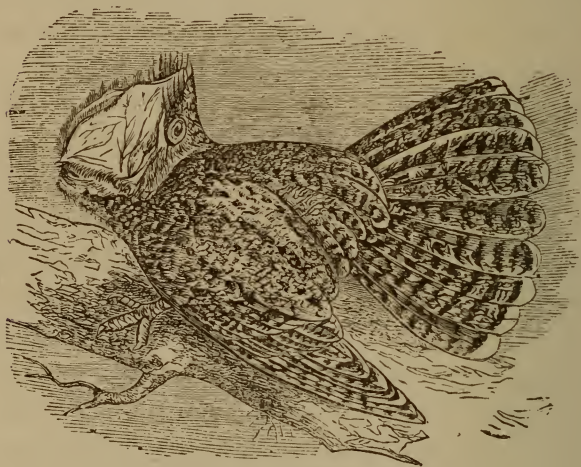


FIG. 78.—*Chuck-Wills-Widow*.

finds a cordial welcome to our groves by those who are true lovers of birds.

“But the oddest member of this class of birds, curious from its voice and habits, is the *Chuck-Wills-Widow*. (Fig. 78.)

“Of this bird I have a characteristic drawing.

Seated lengthwise on a log, with tail spread and wings drooping, the hairy mouth stretched to its utmost capacity, the bird is repeating *Chuck-wills-widow, chuck-wills-widow*, with a strong accent on the first and last syllables. The chosen place for this performance is on the borders of some thick swamp or pine grove, where he continues his sombre and monotonous complaint through most of the night. This, blending with the cries of other night-birds and the croaking of the numerous frogs, makes a music too dismal for long enjoyment. These birds are not numerous visitors to our section, though heard often enough to make us acquainted with their peculiar cry; but as we go southward the numbers rapidly multiply, and by the time we have reached the pines of the Carolinas they are as numerous as any one could wish.

“In one habit our *Night-jars* are alike—they make their nest on the open ground with little or no preparation, and lay two eggs somewhat dingy and mottled. More than once in passing over an unused common I have stumbled on the nest of one of the birds, especially that of the night-hawk, and would almost step on the bird before she would leave her eggs. When finally forced from her treasures, she would go limping and fluttering away, as though almost disabled, after the manner of the oven-bird,

to draw the intruder from the nest; and when this was successful, then the bird suddenly found the use of her wings and was soaring in the air, while the dupe stood looking at the feat with a puzzled expression.

“The night-jars are very useful birds, especially as they destroy a class of insects that the smaller birds never meddle with, as the larger beetles and moths.

“The Old World has several very interesting members of the night-jar family, among which may be named the *Long-winged* and the *Leona Night-jar* of South Africa. This last named bird, a drawing of which I have to show you (Fig. 79), is especially noted for two long and singularly-shaped feathers which start out from the middle of the wing coverts and extend twenty-five or thirty inches.

“In this bird the elongated feathers are bare until near the ends, when they are broadly tipped, but in the long-winged variety these plumes are broadest when they put out from the shoulders and taper to a point. In other respects the birds are much alike.

“We shall only have time at this interview to call attention to one more bird, and as he is so common, he will need no particular description—the *Belted Kingfisher*, which we saw last summer on our excursion flying up and down the creek and along the shores of the pond. He moves with a kind of dart-

ing motion, and generally, when about to take wing or just as he lights, utters a few sharp scolding notes. Often he is noticed to make a sudden plunge into



FIG. 79.—*Leona Night-jar*.

the water, and seldom fails to capture the finny prey for which he made the venture. His plumage is a handsome blending of blue, black, and white, and

is not without beauty. A fine crest on the head and a long sharp bill complete his make-up. The nest is made in a deep excavation in the sand-banks on the shore, the direction being somewhat upward, with a small chamber at the end. The eggs are generally six, and clear white. I remember once getting a bloody finger by thrusting my hand into one of these nests when Lady Kingfisher was at home. A sharp and stinging blow from her bill was a sufficient admonition that my intrusion was not welcome—a hint that required no repetition for me to comprehend, and though I much coveted one of the eggs, I had no disposition to incur a second attack.

“Allowing me to express my pleasure in finding that you have lost no portion of the interest which you first manifested in my efforts to please and instruct you, I now bid you good-bye. You are dismissed.”



## CHAPTER XIX.

### *PIGEONS, DOVES, TURKEYS, PEACOCKS, ETC.*

“THIS afternoon,” said Miss Truat, on resuming her sketches, “we shall consider some birds with which most of you are familiar, and will begin with the *Columbæ*, or *Pigeons*. The order has its representatives in nearly all parts of the world, but the most interesting member of the family is peculiar to our country—the well-known *Wild Pigeon*. These birds we see in countless numbers somewhat late in the spring as they come in immense flocks to feed in our woods and rear their young broods. They are very graceful in form, and some of the old male pigeons have very brilliant plumage. On the wing they are among the swiftest and most attractive of birds. They can attain the fearful speed of a mile a minute and maintain it for hours together; hence it is not uncommon for them to fly a hundred and fifty or two hundred miles in a morning to reach some favorite feeding-place. They are eminently social, and are always found in large flocks when on the wing, and seek a common roosting- and feeding-

FIG. 80.—*Pigeon Roost.*

place. This last custom constitutes the marked peculiarity of the species. A 'pigeon roost' is one of the great curiosities of ornithology. (Fig. 80.) This

immense 'city of birds' is located on some ridge where the beech, oak, and other nut-bearing trees extend over a large tract of country. Here the roost is made and the rude nests of sticks are constructed. In the morning the entire multitude goes forth 'like an army with banners,' forming thick clouds of birds, the rush of whose wings can be heard for a long distance. In every direction they scatter until a large circumference of two or three hundred miles of country is overspread with them. At night they return again with a sound like a coming storm, loading the trees until the limbs crack and break, and thousands of birds fall to the ground, filling the woods with a constant and indescribable din. It is a great feasting-time for hawks and owls, coons and foxes, and a splendid harvest for those who 'go forth to slaughter,' caring more for that than for recreation.

"These roosts have been numerous in Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana. One has been known for years in Rush County, in the last named state, and has been resorted to during the season of occupation by the curious, the sportsmen, and the neighboring farmers, the last finding it a cheap way to fatten their hogs by obtaining nightly a cartload of pigeons—a feat of easy performance when the roost is in full activity. Kentucky has several of these 'pigeon cities.' One

near Hardinsville, in the southern part of the state, Audubon, the great bird artist, has graphically described—an account which I am sure you will be pleased to hear. He says :

“ ‘ It was, as is always the case, in a portion of the forest where the trees were of great magnitude, and where there was little underwood. I rode through it upward of forty miles, and crossing it in different parts, found its average breadth to be rather more than three miles. My first view of it was about a fortnight subsequent to the period when they had made choice of it, and I arrived there nearly two hours before sunset. Few pigeons were then to be seen, but a great number of persons, with horses and wagons, guns and ammunition, had already established encampments on the borders. Two farmers from the vicinity of Russelville, distant more than two hundred miles, had driven upward of three hundred hogs to be fattened on the pigeons which were to be slaughtered. Here and there the people who were employed in plucking and salting what had already been procured were seen sitting in the midst of large piles of these birds. Many trees two feet in diameter, I observed, were broken off at no great distance from the ground, and the branches of many of the largest and tallest had given way, as if the forest had been swept by a tornado. Everything proved to me that



the number of birds resorting to this part of the forest must be immense beyond conception.

“ ‘As the period of their arrival approached their foes anxiously prepared to receive them. Some were furnished with iron pots containing sulphur, others with torches of pine-knots, many with poles, and the rest with guns. The sun was lost to our view, yet not a pigeon had arrived. Everything was ready, and all eyes were gazing on the sky, which appeared in glimpses among the tall trees. Suddenly there burst forth a general cry of “Here they come!” The noise which they made, though yet distant, reminded me of a hard gale at sea passing through the rigging of a close-reefed vessel. As the birds arrived and passed over me I felt a current of air that surprised me. Thousands were soon knocked down by the polemen. The birds continued to pour in. The fires were lighted, and a magnificent as well as wonderful and almost terrifying sight presented itself. Pigeons, arriving by thousands, alighted everywhere, one above another, until solid masses were formed on the branches all around. Here and there the perches gave way under the weight with a crash, and falling to the ground, destroyed hundreds of the birds beneath, forcing down the dense groups with which every stick was loaded. It was a scene of uproar and confusion. I found it quite useless to



speak or even to shout to those persons who were nearest to me. Even the reports of guns were seldom heard, and I was aware of the firing only by seeing the shooters reloading.

“ ‘No one dared venture within the line of devastation. The hogs had been penned up in due time, the picking up of the dead and wounded being left for the next morning’s employment. The pigeons were constantly coming, and it was past midnight before I perceived a decrease in the number of those that arrived.’ ”

When she had finished this description, Miss Truat said :

“This is truly a graphic but disgusting sketch ; such a scene of disorder, blood, and slaughter perpetrated on such harmless and beautiful birds ought to have disgraced every one engaged in it, and it is no wonder that the birds soon refuse to return to the scene of such brutality.

“The wild pigeon lives almost exclusively on grain, large seeds, and nuts, especially seeking the latter. Beech-nuts are the favorite food ; and when the birds can find these in plenty, they seldom seek farther until the stock is exhausted. But when nothing better is at hand, resort is had to the crop of acorns, and it is astonishing how the pigeon can swallow the immense acorns that are found in its

craw. I once took from one bird three of the largest acorns which I ever saw, they being all that the crop contained. But we cease to wonder at the feat when we carefully examine the throat and craw of the pigeon. These organs are capable of immense dilation—so great that the bird can swallow an object nearly as large as its own head. The gizzard is also unusually large and muscular. To feed its young the pigeon secretes a milky fluid which is mixed with the macerated food, and then fed to the squab from the bill of the old bird.

“The nest of the wild pigeon is a rude structure of sticks and leaves placed in the forked branch of a tree, hardly seeming deep enough to hold the eggs, which are never more than two in number, white and oval. Two or three broods are reared each season; but even with this ratio of multiplication, it is difficult to account for the enormous quantities of pigeons which visit us every year.



FIG. 81.—*Carolina Dove.*

“The *Carolina Doves* (Fig. 81) are smaller than the pigeon, and not so fine in plumage. They are quite numerous all over the

country, but do not compare in numbers with the wild variety, nor do they congregate in such enormous flocks, nor use one common roosting-place. They may be seen in the fields and along the highways in flocks of half a dozen or so, and often in single pairs. They make a somewhat melancholy cooing, from which they have been called the *Mourning Dove*, but the name originates in quite a mistake, for their notes are not those of mourning, but of love; they are not wailing for the dead, but singing to charm a living mate. They are too sweet and

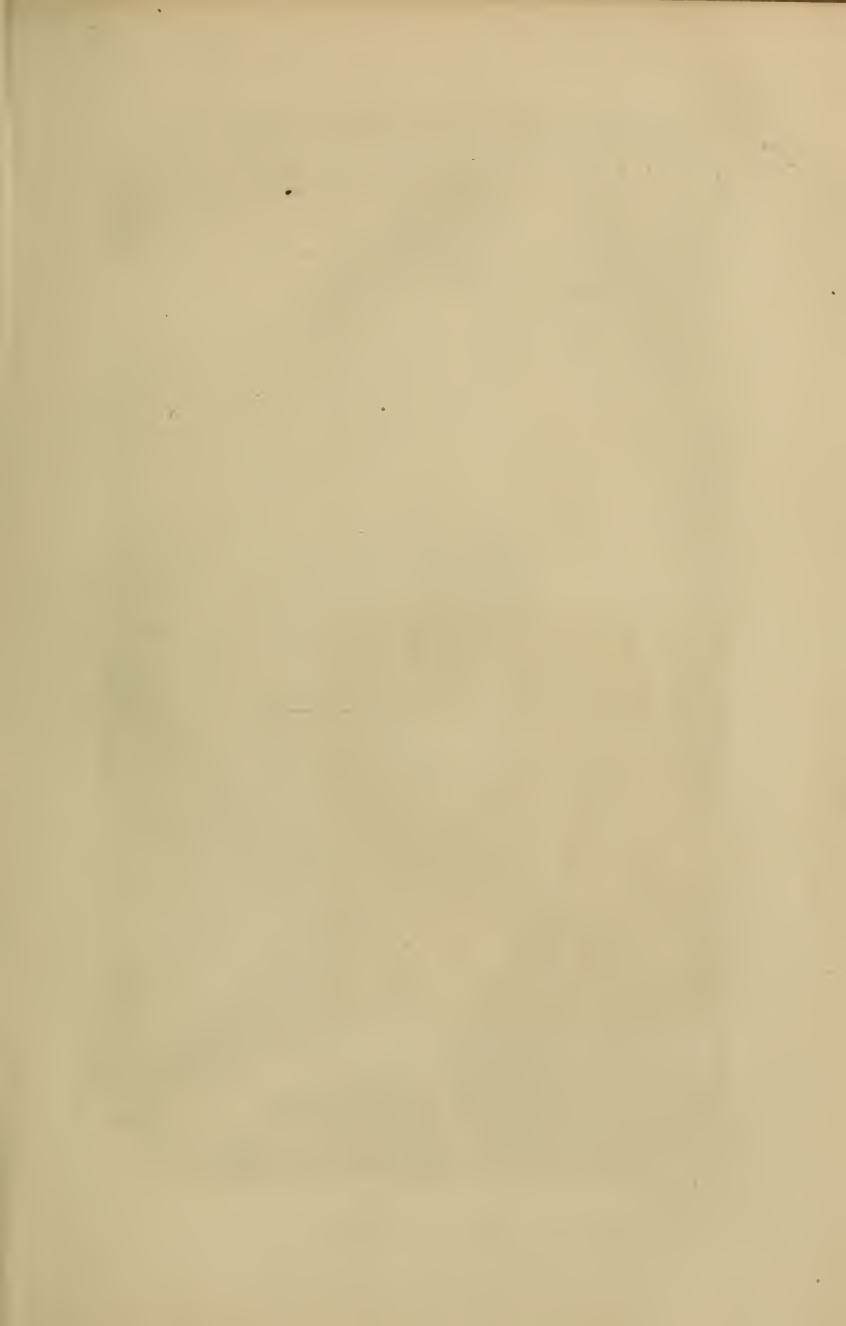


FIG. 82.—Pouter Pigeon.

harmless birds to be molested by the fowler—facts which will be respected by the true sportsman, for only a bird butcher would kill one of them.

“Of the *Domesticated Doves* there is hardly

an end to the variety produced by crossing and re-crossing. Beginning, most likely, with the *Common Blue Rock Pigeon*, we have now barbs, owls, carriers,









pouters, fantails, nuns, tumblers, and many others; some beautiful, some odd, and some, like the *Carrier Pigeon*, useful. Some of these varieties are of the most eccentric formation. The *Pouter*, for instance (Fig. 82), can puff out the crop to marvelous dimensions. The nuns and jacobins have a curious arrangement of feathers about the neck and head, and the fantails show a rare spread of wings and tail. The carrier is a useful bird, often employed to send rapid messages and to give intelligence when cities are closely invested in times of war. These birds can be taken hundreds of miles from their roosting-places, but as soon as released they will make a circle or two, and then take a bee line for home, bearing whatever of news may have been attached to the neck.

“Being raised by man and familiarized to his presence, the doves become exceedingly tame, and lose nearly all the habits of their ancestors. The *Blue Doves* are the most common and hardy, requiring but little care save a box or a few holes cut in the gable of a barn or outhouse. With these provisions they are satisfied, as they will feed among the poultry and multiply with great rapidity.

“They will enter the stable and get on good terms with the horses, feeding out of the manger with great familiarity. (Fig. 83.) Sometimes they will



FIG. 84.—*Adopted into the Family.*

take a notion to form associations with creatures which are natural enemies, as an instance which once came under my notice will illustrate. A dove

of the common sort unfortunately lost its mate, and for days was moping about quite inconsolable. In this condition it happened to come near an old cat occupying a basket with a litter of young kittens. For some cause it seemed to take a great liking to Madame Puss. It was perhaps because puss looked so benevolent and motherly; at any rate, the dove hopped into the basket, and after a short contemplation nestled down by the little kitties, and was seemingly consoled for its loss. The old cat gave a searching look at the disconsolate intruder, and seemed to take in the situation; for, with a benevolent purr, she made room for the new-comer, and accepted it as a member of the family. (Fig. 84.)

“The dove has a sanctified record. It first proved to the inhabitants of the ark that the flood had ceased from off the face of the earth, by presenting the olive leaf, which has ever since been a sign of peace. It was also an accepted sacrifice at God’s altar, and finally became the visible embodiment of the divine Spirit as it hovered over the only begotten Son of God when he came up from the waters of the Jordan. From that hour God’s people have lovingly and imploringly sung,

‘Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove.’

“The pigeons are a kind of a transition order.

They are perchers, like the *Insectorial* birds, and scratchers, like the *Gallinæ*; hence in passing from them we very naturally take up this latter order, otherwise known as *Terrestrial Birds*. The members of this family are distinguished for the strength of their legs and toes; and for short, concave wings, conferring ability for rapid but unprotracted flight. They occasionally light on perches, but only when flushed, seeking safety, or for roosting. The nests are on the ground, and are rude in construction; the eggs numerous, varying from one to two dozen. A striking peculiarity of this class, shared also by the swimming birds, is that the young are able to leave the nest as soon as hatched, often carrying pieces of the shell still attached to them. In all the classes of birds we have before noticed the young are blind when first hatched, and perfectly helpless, requiring many days of careful nursing and feeding before they can take care of themselves. Thus we can see how variously God endows creatures which have the same general characteristics.

“The *Gallinæ* are distinguished for their excellence as an article of diet, furnishing alike the tables of the poor with their Christmas chicken and the rich with their dainty partridge or fattened turkey. To the excellence of this last-named bird the whole world has borne its testimony. It is singular, how-



FIG. 83.—*Wild Turkey.*

ever, that, being exclusively a native of the New World, it should go to the Old to get a name. Its



Oriental designation was a mistake which neither time nor determination has been able to correct. We claim the bird as a native American, and shall insist on the rights and glories of our turkeys.

“Of the tame turkey I need say nothing, as you are familiar with his looks and qualities; but of the wild variety we have a number of facts which may be new and interesting. This splendid bird (Fig. 85) much resembles our common brown turkey, only a little darker in color; at least, this has been the case with the numbers which have come under my notice.

“The native haunts of the wild turkey are the Middle States, being unusually numerous in Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, and the states immediately west of these. A few are still found among the mountains of Pennsylvania, where it is said they were once very plentiful. Like the Indian, the buffalo, and the deer, the turkeys seem to melt away before the march of civilization, and soon we shall have only the domesticated bird to remind us of the extinct native race.

“During the warm months the turkeys scatter to nest and feed on the borders of swamps and thickets, but as cold weather approaches they gather in small flocks to fatten on the rich stores of mast with which the ground is covered. At this season in their

chosen ranges their 'scratchings' are often found by the hunter, and the gobblings of the rival males heard not far off. They seldom take wing, not even when disturbed, if they can avoid it, but trust to their fleetness of foot, which is very great. Their flight is so short that, when compelled to cross a broad stream, they spend two or three days, strutting and jabbering over the matter, before they can screw up sufficient courage to make the attempt. When the thing is decided, they ascend to the top of the highest tree on the shore, and then, at a given cluck of the veteran leader, they all launch away, some to reach the opposite shore and some to fall into the water and reach land as best they can, which they generally do, the worse only by a good wetting.

"Being so much prized for the table, the wild turkeys are hunted and trapped with great enthusiasm. The latter manner of taking them is somewhat curious, and illustrates the stupidity of the bird. A large pen is made of light poles and covered over. Then, beginning two or three rods off, a trench is dug, growing deeper and deeper until it passes under the enclosure, where there is depth enough for a turkey to enter. The trench comes to the surface within the pen, a cover being laid over it near the wall. Corn is now dropped along leading to the ditch, and through it into the enclosure. This trail the unsus-

pecting turkeys follow until they are led inside, when the bait suddenly ceases. The birds begin at once to seek an outlet from their prison, but only continue running round and round the enclosure with heads up, poking here and there through the crevices, never once stooping to find the open ditch through which they entered. Very simple, some may say, but not more so than classes of more pretending bipeds who are often snared to their ruin by keeping their heads too high.

“Turkeys have a curious custom of amusing themselves in what is called a ‘turkey dance,’ practiced by both the wild and tame varieties. After they have satisfied their appetites, they will seek some warm sunny bank and soon begin their amusement. The old gobblers will strut and trail their wings, spread their tails, and utter their garrulous notes, while the hens dance about with equal animation, crying, *Quit, quit*. After a sufficient prelude, they all begin to hop and dance, passing and repassing each other in quite a well-set figure, keeping it up for some time, when, with a general gobbling all round, they come to a pause. After a brief rest, the same performance is gone through again, and repeated until the birds are satisfied.

“The *Peacock* (Fig. 86) is the Asiatic representative of the turkey family. The female of this class









differs but little from the hen turkey, but the male is justly celebrated for his magnificent tail. This adornment has led to the domestication of the bird; for though it is still eaten and was once regarded as a rare delicacy, it has now no great value as an article of food. The tail of the peacock when fully spread is indeed a sight



FIG. 86.—*Peacock.*

to behold. All the shades of the rainbow dazzle and sparkle in its plumes, while their daintily-dyed and fringed terminations are surpassingly gorgeous. (Fig. 87.) Its very monotony of splendor, however, detracts from its merits, and leaves the palm of beauty to the birds of Paradise, already noticed.

"The peacock has been extensively domesticated in all countries, and was one of the peculiar treasures which added to the glories of Solomon's wealth.

"Perhaps next to the peacock the *Argus Pheasant* (Fig. 88) deserves mention as a beautiful variety of the *Gallinæ*. This bird is a native of Sumatra and neighboring localities, and is justly celebrated.

"In the order of beauty the wings take the place

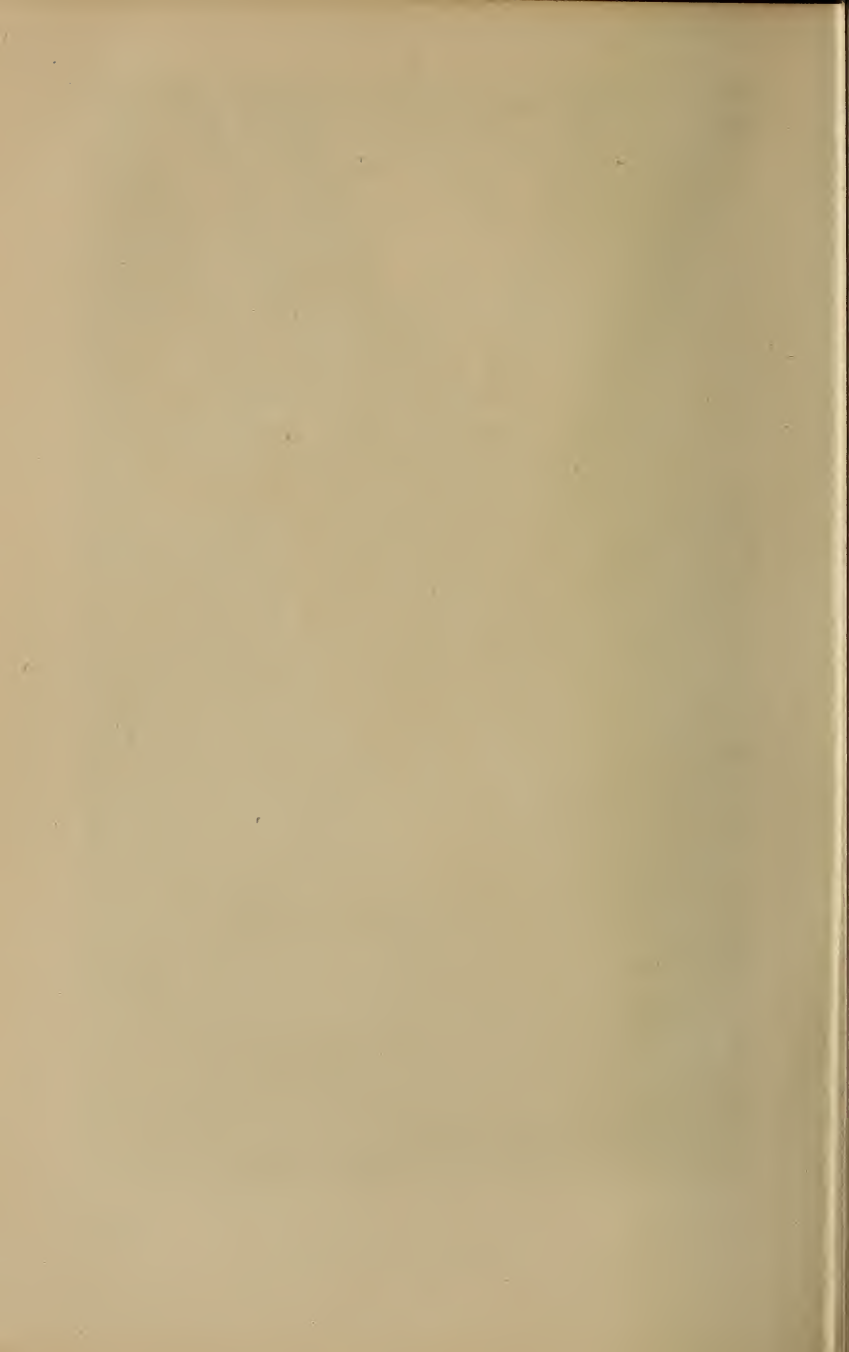
of the tail in this pheasant. The tail is formed of two immensely prolonged feathers supported by



FIG. 89.—*Golden Pheasants.*

some shorter ones at the base, but the wings are gorgeous. The colors are rich black, brown, orange, fawn, olive, and white, and so spread on as to make the plumes seem to be full of eyes. Although the argus is not larger than the common owl, its length,







including the tail, is more than five feet. It is not so easily domesticated, and hence is not often seen in a live state, but my beautiful picture gives you a good idea of the bird, and I need say no more about him.

“The whole race of plumed pheasants were originally natives of Asia Minor, but have been introduced into many parts of Europe, where they have multiplied and become naturalized. Of these naturalized birds the *Golden Pheasants* of England and the Continent (Fig. 89) stand pre-eminent.

“This bird is celebrated not only for its beauty of plumage, but its excellent table qualities also. Its crest is golden-yellow, with a tinge of carmine, while orange, black, green, yellow, crimson, and scarlet complete the rich coloring of its plumage.

“The *Silver Pheasant* (Fig. 90) is a little less attractive than its golden cousin.

“The crest on the head is purple black, and a like color covers the breast and abdomen; the back and wings are silver-white delicately penciled with black, the long tail corresponding, except the two central feathers, which are pure white.

“These pheasants were originally natives of China, which country deserves special thanks for sending such beautiful additions to the stock of the ‘outside barbarians.’ A few more such rich gifts would



almost induce us to pardon the low estimation which the Chinese place upon the civilization of the world.



FIG. 90.—*Silver Pheasants.*

But here another of our pleasant interviews must close."

## CHAPTER XX.

### *DOMESTIC FOWLS, PARTRIDGES, AND OSTRICHES.*

WHEN the next opportunity occurred for the pleasant bird-talks, Miss Truat said to her pupils :

“ At our last interview we closed our conversation by a reference to the pheasants and their importation into other countries where they have become naturalized. These birds naturally grade into the *Jungle Fowls*, which are considered the typical *Gallinæ* and the great ancestors of our barn-yard poultry. Like the pigeons, these birds have been domesticated, crossed, and recrossed until we have an almost endless variety, from the sharp, hard-featured game fowl, which still retains most of the native type both in form and disposition, to the full-breasted, gentle, motherly old hen (Fig. 91) which sings and clucks around our door-yards. We need not stop to describe the common or fancy breeds of poultry which have been produced, nor enter into the ‘chicken war’ in asserting the superior merits of

some favorite birds. All can please themselves. We have short legs and long legs, high combs and

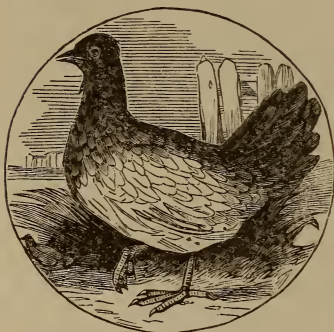


FIG. 91.—*Domestic Hen.*

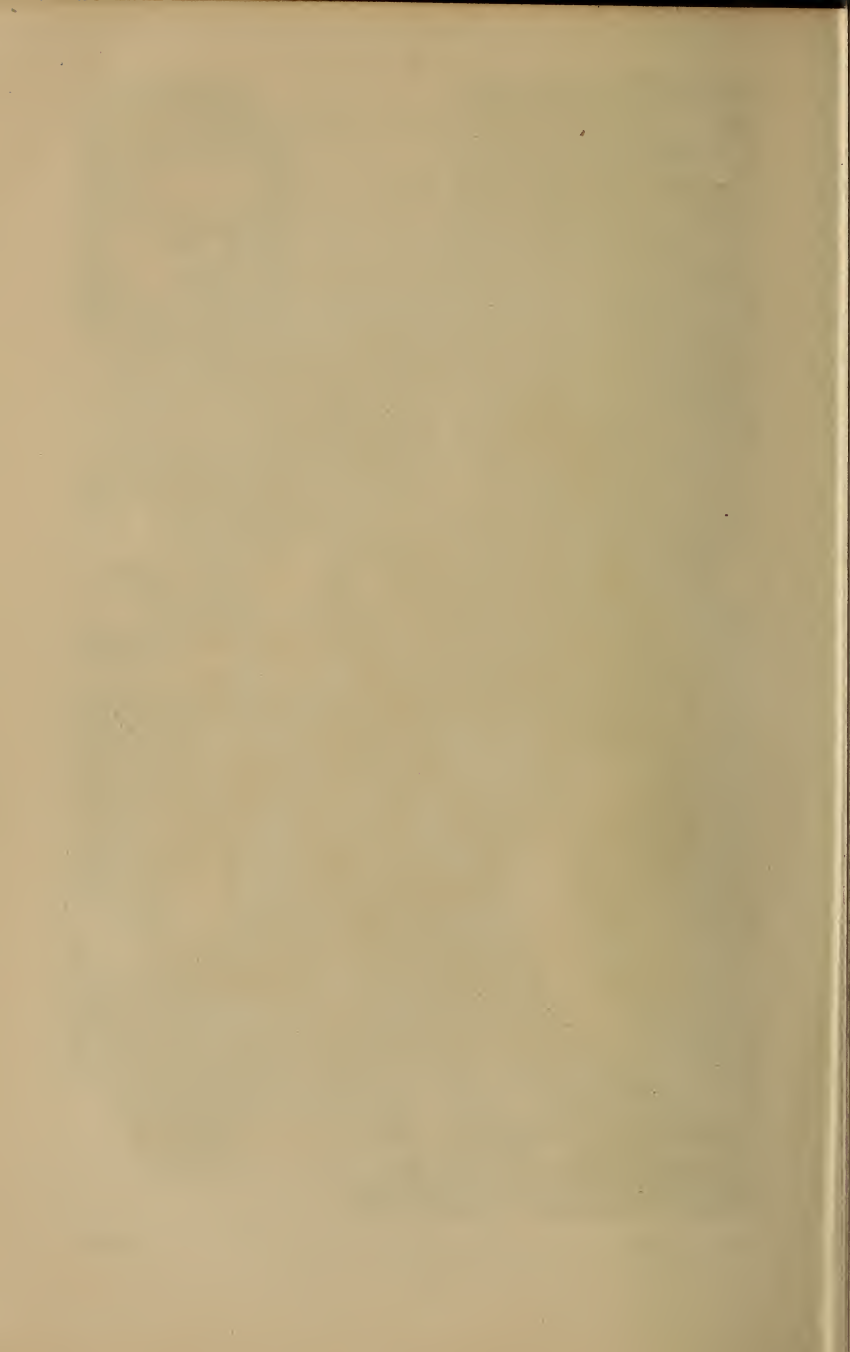
low combs, clean polls and top-knots, dorkings and cochins, bantams and black Spanish, all having their merits and their advocates. We love them all—love them for the nice eggs which they lay for us, and the rich broils and

Christmas roasts which they furnish. Nor are our affections all based on this lower consideration. We love them for their social qualities. Well do I remember an old hen that we had called ‘Old Ducky,’ and the childish joy with which I used to feed her and her little brood from my bowl of bread and milk. She learned to know the rap of my spoon as well as I did the tinkle of the dinner-bell, and would cluck her callow charge to my side at once, ready for the free share which she knew her young family would surely get. (Fig. 92.)

“There Biddy would stand and watch the drip from my spoon with such a thankful expression, while her little chicks were busy at my feet picking up the tit-bits. And then with what pride myself









and little brother would watch the growth of the wee things, nursing and tending them day by day! and when grown, how we delighted to show them to our



FIG. 93.—*Showing the Chickens.*

admiring friends (Fig. 93), and expatiate on their growth and beauty!

"All this may seem very childish; yet I love to recall this

'Light of other days,'

for it has a charm that the lapse of years only makes brighter and sweeter. Ah! be assured, children, that the pictures of memory which you will have to contemplate in after years are getting their shadings from the scenes which you are now beholding; and you will have many a one, as I have proved, which will not bring to you so much pleasure as the picture of 'Old Ducky' and her family, painted in memory long ago, does to me. Try to make happy the days of childhood, and the clouds will not hang so gloomy and dark over the coming days when you will say, 'I have no pleasure in them.' The love of an old hen and her chickens is worth striving for, and is a sweeter recollection than many a striking scene and great success where the heart felt no impulses but those of selfishness. But let us go on with our lessons.

"Leaving the foreign pheasants and their domesticated descendants, we turn to a handsome native group, known under the various names of grouse, partridges, and quails. These birds, in some of their varieties, are found from the Arctic snows to the everglades of Florida. They are of the same gene-

ral dusky brown, with more or less individual markings. Some have crests; some, tufted necks; and most, feathered legs. On the Western plains they are known as *Prairie Chickens*; in Canada as *Canada Grouse*, or *Spruce Partridge*; while with us the *Ruffed Grouse* is best known. This bird has the general reddish-brown colors of the order, but is distinguished for the elegant ruff encircling the neck. It remains with us the year round, and has some very interesting habits. When a deep snow falls, accompanied by wind and drifting, this bird takes shelter by diving into a snow-bank, where it will remain until the storm ceases, and then come forth to feed on the buds and seeds. I have more than once seen the birds start up from almost beneath my feet, where not the least disturbance of the snow indicated their concealment. But the most interesting custom of this bird is its habit of 'drumming.' This performance is begun early in the spring; indeed, I have heard it on warm days before the snows had disappeared. The male bird, which only indulges in the pastime, seats himself astride some old log covered with soft moss, and then beats the log with his extended wings, making a hollow drumming sound which can be heard for a long distance. The movement is slow at first, but rapidly increases until it is quick as the roll of a drum. This performance

will be continued sometimes for hours, with various intervals; and, like the whip-poor-will, the bird has the power of so modifying the sound as to wholly deceive the listener as to the distance.

“The *Canada Grouse* is a rare bird with us, and confines its range to the thick woods and swamps. Its eggs are among the most beautiful that are laid, and I had long desired to add one to my collection, but should probably have failed except for the skill and assistance of poor Jim Lee. Making him comprehend my wants, after careful searching for many days he found the prize; the nest was hid away underneath the low and widespreading boughs of a hemlock, and contained twelve eggs like this beauty which I show you.

(Plate II., Fig. 5.)

It is of a beautiful yellow-buff color, with spots and blotches of two shades of rich brown, and oval in form. I hold it as among my richest egg treasures.



FIG. 94.—Bob-White.

“But passing the grouse or partridges, we come to a very common



bird, the *Quail*, or *Bob-White* (Fig. 94), as he is more familiarly called.

“In the South this bird is known as the *Virginia Partridge*, and it is not definitely settled which name is the proper one; but he is a nice bird, call him by what name they please. The common quails are so well known as to need no description. They differ but little, whether found in the North or South, the main variation being more or less white, especially under the throat. (Fig. 95.) On the Western plains and the Pacific coast, however, there are several varieties with distinct and peculiar markings. Several of them are found in California.

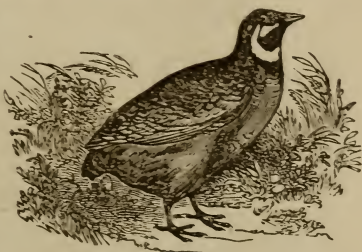


FIG. 95.—*White-throated Quail.*

“One of these varieties has two long plumes which put out from the head and fall down very gracefully over the back; but another, and the most beautiful, shows five splendid feathers starting from the top of the head and recurved over the forehead, forming a magnificent crest, as you see in my picture. (Fig. 96.)

“One more bird we must name before we close our lesson, as it stands with its compeers halfway be-



tween the order we have been considering and the next most prominent one, which will be the subject of our next conversation. The *Ostrich* is something of a scratcher; and though not a *Wader*, he has very long legs, which he well knows how to use; hence he is properly placed at the head of the *Cursores*, or *running birds*.



FIG. 96.—*California Quail*.

“From an inspection of the specimen which you saw in my collection, you will understand how appropriately it has been named. The bird cannot fly, but it has little need of wings to enable it to escape, as it can outstrip the fleetest horse. In the thirty-ninth chapter of Job we find a striking allusion to this fact: ‘What time she lifteth herself on high,

she scorneth the horse and his rider.' All who have seen the ostrich in its native condition have testified to the truth of this description.

"The ostrich is the largest of all known existing birds. (Fig. 97.) It inhabits the hot deserts of Af-



FIG. 97.—*Ostrich.*

rica, for which locality God has especially endowed it, though we should think that its abundant covering of thick downy plumes would be inconveniently warm in that hot climate. The birds vary some-

what in size, ranging from six to eight feet in height, the long neck comprising nearly one-half the measure. The colors of the rich plumes are generally black and white, the latter color prevailing on the tail and the under parts of the bird. These feathers have considerable value as adornments for military purposes and for ladies.

“As the ostrich because of its great speed cannot easily be taken in the chase, the natives have to resort to strategy. The hunter scrapes a hole in the sand near the nest; in this hole he carefully hides himself, and when the bird comes to deposit the eggs kills it with poisoned arrows. The nest is simply a little scraping in the sand; and when the eggs are laid, the parents pay little or no attention to them after burying them in the sand, leaving the sun to do the work of hatching. Job, in the chapter from which we have already quoted, refers to this habit: ‘Which leaveth her eggs in the earth, and warmeth them in the dust. And forgetteth that the foot may crush them, or that the wild beast may break them. She is hardened against her young ones, as though they were not hers.’

“The egg of the ostrich is a curiosity. It is often five or six inches in length and will weigh three pounds, and has a great value to the poor Africans. Its contents furnish a delicious meal, and its empty

shell becomes one of their most useful utensils. With a small hole in one end several are strung together, and are used by the women for carrying water or holding milk or other liquids. Divided, they are made to serve as cup and spoons, and for several other purposes; hence, as the ostrich lays a large number of eggs, the discovery of a nest is to the poor native a very joyful event.

“In Australia the *Emeu* takes the place of the ostrich. It is smaller in size, and has not the swiftness of foot of the African bird.

“The New World is not without its member of the *Cursor* family, the South American *Rhea*. This species inhabits the borders of the river La Plata and the adjacent plains. It is a swift-footed, shy bird, but easily becomes confused when hunted, and then is readily destroyed by the natives. The bird is wholly covered by a rich mass of darkish-gray or black plumes, which have some value, but are not equal to those of the ostrich.

“This bird, like the ostrich, scoops a hole in the sand, and lays from twenty to twenty-five eggs, but differs from its African relative in incubating its own eggs instead of leaving that parental duty to the sun. As an article of food both the eggs and the birds are much sought after.

“But we have once more reached the limit of the

time which we have allowed to these interviews, and must leave the *Cursores* to run on as they will.

“Before dismissing you this afternoon I think it proper to say,” continued Miss Truat, “that two more special lessons will finish the course which I have marked out, as they will carry us through the orders of birds. In the pleasant hours we have devoted to these beautiful creatures we have not attempted to notice every bird known in the different classes, not even those with which we are familiar. Our object has been rather to present a few of each order, with the more striking characteristics which they exhibit, and thus give you a general outline of this department of natural history. In doing this I have had two objects in view: first—and I make the statement frankly—I wanted in some way to secure attention until I could convince you that I loved you and wished to do you good. In this purpose I think I can say I have not been disappointed. My second aim was to give you pleasant and useful instruction in a department which has ever had special charms for me, hoping to infuse into your minds something of the enthusiasm which I have felt for the beautiful birds and a love and reverence for him who made them for our admiration. In this respect also, I trust, I have not been wholly unsuccessful.



“Let me say, further, that in closing this special series I do not propose to cease from my efforts to please and instruct you, but shall continue to devote occasional hours to some kindred topics which will give us equal pleasure and information.

“In our two final lessons I shall have some very handsome drawings to show you, and the habits of the birds we shall notice will be of equal interest to any which we have already described. Perhaps I ought to say in this connection that my personal interest in these things has been much increased by the amount of real information which I have received from poor Jim Lee respecting some of the birds that we shall notice. Simple as you may regard him in other things, God has wonderfully endowed him with a love for the birds and ability to understand their habits; and though I have spent my whole life in studying their peculiarities, both in books and in nature, I am not ashamed to confess that Jim has been to me a valuable instructor. God chooses sometimes the weak things of this world to confound the wise. I have thought that I had considerable bird wisdom, but I have so repeatedly been shown to be completely mistaken by Jim’s superior wisdom that I begin to feel that my pretensions should be quite moderated. I make these statements, my dear young friends, to guard you against

lightly esteeming any creature that God has made. If he has seen fit to deny to any an even balance of faculties, he may have so quickened one of his powers as to place the person in a position which commands our respect. .

“But I need not detain you longer on this topic, for I have with pleasure observed the kind manner in which you hold intercourse with Jim in connection with the Sunday-school. You are beginning to learn what a kindly spirit he is, and that, though slow and dull, yet there is a spark which begins to kindle and glow. My father is very hopeful of his progress, and I have no more pleasant task than to use my feeble powers to blow the spark and see it brighten under the process. And now good-bye.”

## CHAPTER XXI.

### HERONS, STORKS, PLOVERS, STILTS, AND FLAMINGOES.

**I**MMEDIATELY after the last bird lesson it was noticed that something mysterious was on hand among the pupils of Miss Truat's school; and, as formerly, David was evidently at the head of the movement. There were frequent earnest consultations in out-of-the-way corners and stealthy visits to the woods. Even Jim Lee was seen to be confederate in the plot, whatever it might be. Could it be possible that, after all, the spirit of rebellion in the young Arabs had only been checked, not subdued, and that it was about to break out again? Whatever the purpose was, it was carefully concealed, and we shall have to let events reveal the intent of all this plotting and secrecy.

"Again ready for the hour's gratification," Miss Truat said. "At our last interview we bade good-bye to the *Scratchers*, with their short, strong legs and claws, and to-day we naturally pass to the *Gralatores*, with their long slim legs and partially webbed feet. Birds of this order are distinguished by hav-

ing legs adapted to their peculiar habits of life as dwellers around streams of water, and largely living on what these produce. They are naturally divided into two classes—those that are mostly found wading in the shallows and those which are seen running along the shores, and hence called ‘shore birds.’

“Of the first class, the largest, and perhaps the best known to us, is the *Great Blue Heron*, or *Crane*, as it is more generally called in the country. These large birds are not numerous, but sufficiently so to give every mill-pond or small lake a specimen or two, by which means we are made familiar with their appearance and habits. This heron is rather awkward in both form and movements, whether wading the shore or on the wing, and particularly so when making efforts to rise into the air. His long, ungainly legs are brought into the required line with the body with considerable effort, and the neck correspondingly stretched out, to be thrown back on the shoulders when fairly on the wing. The wings at this time have a rapid, strained movement; but when fully soaring, the strokes are slow and not ungraceful. There is nothing very attractive in the rather dull plumage of this bird, relieved somewhat by the not inelegant crest feathers. Its favorite position is standing in the shallow water on the borders of some reedy pond or shore, watching

for stray fish, which it seizes with unerring aim and swallows with one effort, even when of large size. It is also very fond of frogs, tadpoles, meadow-mice, snakes, and large insects. The nests are placed on high trees in the midst of some dense thicket of evergreens on the borders of a swamp or some sheet of water, and are generally found in groups of a half dozen or more. They are rude structures, made of twigs and sticks very loosely put together. The eggs are four, of good size, and bluish-green color. The young when first hatched are exceedingly odd-looking little fellows, seeming as though they had just found their bones and were looking around for something to cover them with.

“The *Green Heron*, or *Fly-up-the-creek*, as you boys usually call it, is a smaller and more beautiful bird, but in other respects does not differ materially from the last-named variety.

“The *Snowy Heron* is an attractive bird, being pure white, with a fine crest and a graceful tuft hanging from the breast. Its haunts are the salt meadows all along our coasts, with only an occasional visit to the nearer inland waters.

“With us the herons are not over-numerous, but in some places in Europe they gather in such numbers as almost to compare with our pigeon-roosts. In the days of hawking these heronries were



protected with great care, for they were the principal bird sought after in this field sport, but, like our pigeons, the race is rapidly decreasing.

“The *Stork*, though often met with in Europe in



Fig. 98.—*Stork*.

the milder seasons of the year, is a native of the East, where it still flourishes. It is much like the white herons, except in the largely-increased bill and some black wing feathers, as you will observe in my painting. (Fig. 98.) This bird is of a very

mild disposition, and takes readily to the habitations of man. It manifests a special love for old deserted temples and church steeples. In these places they can be constantly met with as the curious traveler is exploring the ruins of past greatness. In many of the Eastern cities they are met with in the streets and around the quays, as familiar as are the buzzards in the cities of the South.

“Perhaps the most noted of the stork family are those known as the *Adjutant* and the *Marabou*. The first received its name from a disposition to strut about military parade-grounds. It is a large, ungainly bird, with an enormous bill, capable, it is said, of swallowing a full-grown cat, or even a leg of mutton. It has also a curious appendage attached to the lower part of the neck which can be distended into a large sack. The adjutant is quite as useful to the inhabitants of the East as are the buzzards to the cities of the South. It loves carrion, and becomes a useful scavenger in removing dead carcasses and other offal; but it has an excellent qualification which our buzzards do not possess: it is a diligent destroyer of snakes and other vermin, not sparing even the venomous kinds. When gorged, it will stand for hours alternately on each leg, dozing, the very embodiment of indolence.

“The *Marabou* (Fig. 99) is a similar bird, but



FIG. 99.—Marabou.

lacks the pouch attachment on the throat, and is distinguished for furnishing the valuable ‘marabou feathers,’ so highly prized as ornaments.

“A bird of this class which I now show you is called the *Sacred Ibis*, and was worshiped by the

ancient Egyptians as one of their gods. Our own country can boast of possessing one of the handsomest of this variety of birds, the *Scarlet Ibis*, though it must be confessed that it is rarely seen, and perhaps only when on a short visit from the neighboring West India Islands. The *White Ibis* is a permanent resident in Florida, and in warm weather some of the species have ventured to pay short visits even as far north as New Jersey.

“But in our reference to this variety of birds we must not pass the odd yet attractive *Roseate Spoonbill*. Its range is near the Gulf of Mexico, where it inhabits the canebrakes and bayous. The shape of the bill gives it a name; that member is more odd than graceful; but in other respects the bird has great attractions. The color is a deep roseate scarlet, beautifully varied as the light strikes it at different angles. To add to its beauty, the bird has a habit of standing with the wings partly extended. It mainly lives on watersnails, crawfish, and shrimps, which it scoops up very readily with its broad, spoon-shaped bill.

“But leaving these larger birds, our attention is arrested by a class that seem to be made up of oddities, for they appear as though some little bodies had by mistake taken the long legs of some other in order to run away, and then find themselves so elevated that

they are afraid to stretch their stolen members to their full length, and so remain half bent.

"This *Stilt Plover* (Fig. 100) will illustrate my remark. What a small body, poorly balanced on



FIG. 100.—*Stilt Plover*.

excessively long legs! They seem too slim and weak to sustain even the small weight they have to carry, and the bird stands half stooping and trembling, which is the real condition exhibited by it



especially when alighting after a short flight. It stands for some time balancing itself before it can get well on its legs.

“The stilt has feet quite fully webbed, and can swim with ease, though generally preferring to wade in the shallows rather than to venture into deep water. The body of this bird is nearly white, with wings and a narrow portion of the back approaching blackish-green.

“The *Sand Pipers* are much like the stilts, though with legs somewhat shortened. They are found all along our coasts in great numbers, and are noted for their restless, nervous activity. We have a dozen or more varieties of these sand pipers, as they are especially numerous along the shores of New Jersey and Maryland, where they arrive early in May. The salt marshes bordering these states are chosen breeding-places and feeding-grounds. When the tide is out, these active little birds will be seen in troops busily catching stray shrimps and sand-flies, keeping but a few steps in advance of the strollers who may be watching them. But they seem to know when the gunning-season has arrived, and then keep at a more respectful distance.

“Of the *Shore-birds* with which we are most familiar, perhaps the *Kill-deer Plover* is the best known by those residing away from the ocean, and it may

be taken as a type of the plover family in color and form. It is found around all our ponds and swamps, where it runs fitfully along, crying, *kill-deer, kill-deer*, accompanied by a peculiar jerking motion of the tail when pausing for a moment, which it does every few rods. The nest is in some slight hollow near the bank or among the tussocks of grass, and is oddly made up of pebbles, bits of shells, sticks, and straw—anything that can be most readily scraped together. The eggs are four, creamy-yellow, with abundant blotching. (Plate III., Fig. 5.)

“The *Upland Plover* (Fig. 101) is much like the kill-deer in appearance, but differs in preferring the

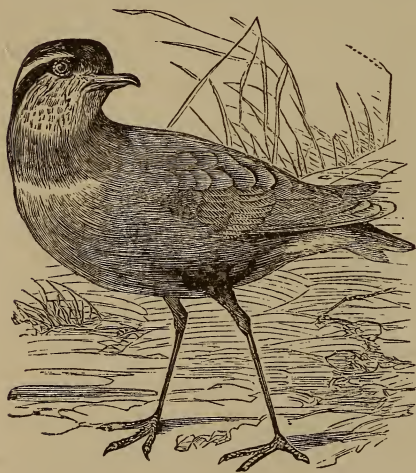


FIG. 101.—*Upland Plover*.

pastures and uplands to the moist shores. The eggs of this species are also larger and lighter in color. (Plate II., Fig. 4.)

“In England they have a small species of this family called the *Dot-*

*teral Plover* (Fig. 102), which has become a by-word for stupidity. It is described as wanting in the activity and sprightliness of the rest of the species, and to call a man a 'dotteral' is a reflection on his good sense.

"The old mother country has one other variety which, both in its beau-

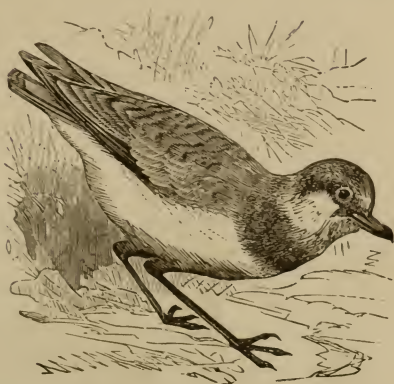


FIG. 102.—*Dotteral Plover.*

ty of plumage and attractive habits, will more than make up for the shortcomings of the poor dotteral—that is, the handsome *Lap-wings* or *Pewits*. (Fig. 103.) The colors of these birds are bright and well distributed. The top of the head, with its tall crest, is black, the sides of the face and neck white, speckled with dark-brown or black, chin and throat jetty-black running up to the eyes, the upper part of the body is coppery-green shaded with purple, while the tail coverts are chestnut, the full tail being black and white, and the under parts of this latter color.

"These birds have a very pretty habit when on

the wing of making graceful circuits in the air, all the while uttering their cry of *Wee-whit! wee-whit!*

“The nest of the lap-wing is made in a small depression, the eggs being of a peculiar shape, large at

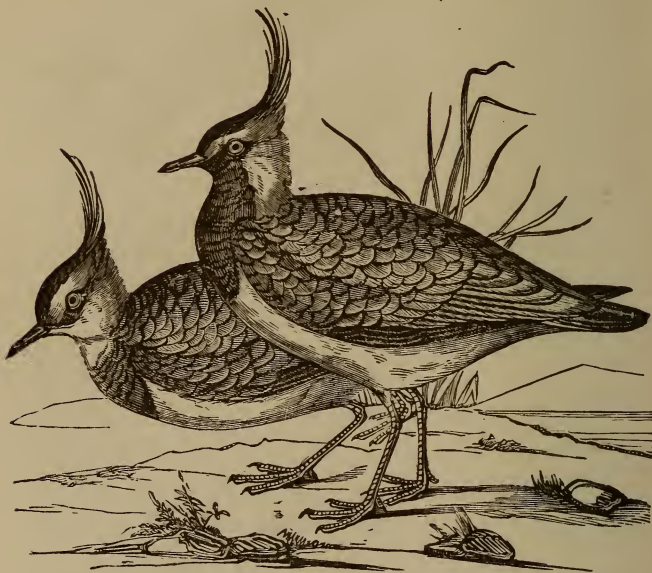


FIG. 103.—*Lap-wings.*

one end and almost sharp at the other, and the bird has a curious habit of arranging them in the nest with the sharp ends touching, thus forming a cross. If disturbed during the sitting, the mother-bird has the trick of feigned lameness to draw the intruder

from her nest. The eggs of the lap-wing are much sought after as an article of diet.

"The *Woodcock* is distinguished from the plovers by the greater length of bill and some difference in shape and plume markings. It is a shy bird, inhabiting low meadows and grassy swamp borders, where the nest is placed in some tuft of bulrushes or clump of reeds. Three or four creamy-drab eggs are laid, thickly speckled. Through the help of Jim Lee I have a fine specimen to show you. (Plate III., Fig. 9.)

"The *Snipe* can be distinguished from the woodcock only by one skilled in the marks of these birds, yet they have some well-defined characteristics. In their manner of feeding they are peculiar, using their long bills to probe the holes of insects and the muddy bottoms from which they draw the concealed tit-bits. The family is a very extensive one, all of the varieties being highly prized as gamebirds, and as eagerly sought after as the woodcock.

"Among the best of these birds *Wilson's Snipe* may be named. This bird forms a nest of grass and leaves hidden away in some bog very difficult to find. The eggs are much like the kill-deer plover's. (Plate III., Fig. 4.)

"The interesting birds called *Rails* belong to the waders. These birds come and go from our marshes



and bays in a mysterious manner, for no one sees them on their migrations. When the reeds and salt meadows have reached a good growth, the rails make their sudden appearance, or rather make themselves heard, as it is seldom that we get a sight of one, though they may be heard near at hand. They are of a plain ashy-dun color, so near the complexion of the mud and reeds among which they conceal themselves that it is only when 'flushed' by pushing a boat during high tide into their hiding-places that they can be seen for a moment, and then the sportsman must be quick, or his game is hidden again. The people along the shores generally call them *Mud Hens*, and seek their eggs with great zeal as an excellent article of food. (Plate III., Fig. 2.)

"But now we come to the last of the waders which we shall notice; and though last, it is by no means least, either in height or beauty of plumage. I mention it in this order, because its full webbed feet naturally grade it into the last order of birds, the *Swimmers*, with which some writers have really classed the bird; but its long legs and custom of wading rather than swimming entitle it rather to the place we assign it—a link between the two orders. Here is a fine drawing of the bird I mean, the *Scarlet Flamingo*. (Fig. 104.) You will see that the legs and neck are much longer than those of other waders; and

when both are stretched fully out, the bird is four or five feet high. The bill is a curiosity, broad, bright yellow, and bent like a scraper, admirably serving the bird in digging up the muddy and sandy



FIG. 104.—*Scarlet Flamingo*.

bottom where it finds its favorite food. The color of the flamingo is a bright scarlet, except some of the wing feathers, forming a narrow border of black. The nest of this bird has ever been held as a great

curiosity. From the length of the flamingo's legs it will be seen how difficult it would be to gather them up into a nest. In any case they would project far beyond the body of the bird. But the instincts of the bird are sufficient for the emergency. A tall mound is built up of mud and other materials, reaching two or three feet in height, in the top of which is scooped out the nest. Here the bird sits astride, with one or both feet in the water which always surrounds the nest.

"Except during the hatching season, the flamingoes congregate in small flocks; and when thus associated, whether standing or flying, they present a very attractive spectacle. It was my good fortune once to enjoy a rare opportunity for observing them in both positions. Some years ago, while making a canoe-voyage down the Red River during the last of November, just after we had made an early morning start, we came to a long, bare sand-beach extending for some miles. This we found densely crowded with various kinds of water-fowls, seemingly resting here for a night while on their southward migration. There were thousands of ducks, geese, brant, herons, and white swans, extending down the beach as far as the eye could see. Far down the line, and in bold relief to a group of white swans, we saw a rank towering far above all the rest and gorgeously out-

viewing them in the glow of scarlet uniforms. At first we were at a loss to make out what this splendid wonder was, but a nearer view showed a flock of scarlet flamingoes, and we let our canoes float gently down that we might enjoy the grand exhibition. While thus engaged, some hunters made an onslaught on the mass, which immediately took wing at the first crack of firearms. These millions of birds crossed the river directly over our heads, literally darkening the heavens, while the rush and roar of their wings were like the coming of a tornado, with a deafening and frightful accompaniment of squalls and cries of alarm. It was one of the grandest sights I ever beheld, and I would not have missed it for a mint of money. In all that grand cloud of frightened birds the flamingoes soared away as the most splendid part of the exhibition, glowing amid that dark array of dusky wings like a sunburst through a storm-cloud.

“The flamingoes are found most numerous in Florida, especially at its southern extremity, called the Keys, from which they make excursions as the warmth of the weather in other portions of the South may invite them from their native everglades.

“Having now approached the last order of birds by the natural divisional steps, we will defer our investigation into its characteristics until our next and

last conversation in this special course, which will be held some time next week ; and so for this afternoon you are dismissed."

"Well, Jake," said David when once in the street, "wasn't Miss Truat's arrangement just what we wanted? By next week we can have all our plans fixed up nicely."

"That's so, chum," was the reply ; "she couldn't have suited us better if she'd tried. But now we must hurry up the boys and girls, and make hay while the sun shines."

No word in this short colloquy indicated what those projected plans implied, any further than to show that something out of the usual way was in contemplation, but whether it meant peace or war developments must prove.



## CHAPTER XXII.

*THE SECRET OUT.—SWANS, GEESE, DUCKS,  
GULLS, ETC.*

BY a careful indirect way the leaders in the secret movement learned when Miss Truat intended to give her last study of birds, and it was at once apparent that something was to culminate on that particular day, which happened to be Thursday. Everything went on as usual until after the dismissal of the school on Wednesday afternoon, when it was observed that the elder scholars of both sexes lingered near the schoolhouse until Miss Truat passed out of sight, when David stepped forward and said :

“Now, boys, let us take our coats off and get our things here as soon as possible while the girls sweep out the schoolhouse and get it ready.”

In obedience to this direction, there was a general rush to a neighboring barn, where Jim Lee was noticed standing, who immediately threw the great doors wide open. When this was done, the eager crowd began to draw forth baskets of moss, tufts of

grass, ropes of ground pine and evergreens, branches of trees in which the nests of birds were yet remaining undisturbed. While this was going on David and his lieutenants were more carefully removing some well-preserved birds, which had been prepared by observing Miss Truat's instructions, and also a rich selection of the eggs of the different birds in the collection. Several live birds were also brought out, nicely arranged in wicker cages of their own make, among them a very handsome red bird. Two cages of squirrels added to the completeness of the list, one containing a beautiful pair of flying squirrels. Jim followed up the rest, lugging a section of a mossy log which had been the favorite drumming-place of a fine tufted grouse that had been nicely prepared to occupy his usual place. In a short time materials enough of this character were brought to the schoolhouse to form a large collection, and the next step was to arrange them properly so as to make the best display. The large platform which Miss Truat usually occupied was cleared of everything save her chair and desk, and here they began to dispose of their gathered materials. On the floor were spread the moss leaves and tussocks of grass containing small nests in their natural positions. A rock or a piece of old log was laid here and there, with nests appropriately adjusted. Jim's big log with

the tufted grouse mounted on top, his wings widely extended as in the act of drumming, was placed in the background. Then with the limbs, branches of evergreens, and ropes of ground pine a large and handsome alcove was constructed, with nests jutting out here and there or left half concealed, according to the habits of the bird to whom they originally belonged. In nearly all the nests the proper number of eggs were deposited or the mother-bird placed on it in a natural position. So busy were the young operators that the structure was nearly completed before the approach of darkness compelled them to desist. When morning returned, the work was resumed, and it was then seen that Deacon Meachem had entered into the plot also, and was aiding with counsel and contributions, for he brought with him two beautiful canaries and a handsome motto on a blue ground. With his assistance the whole thing was completed, and presented a splendid appearance. After taking a good look, to see that all was right, the deacon left, to reappear at another hour.

The collection was really beautiful. It contained one or more of nearly every bird known in the neighborhood, with their nests and eggs placed as nearly in the actual conditions of life as the altered circumstances would allow. Conspicuous among this grouping was the famous snowy owl which David had

snared for his teacher. When all was completed to the satisfaction of the young operators, the beautiful motto which the deacon had brought was put up just over the desk of their teacher ; it read as follows :

“ CONQUERED BY LOVE, WE PAY LOVE’S TRIBUTE ! ”

The whole design was hardly finished before the unsuspecting teacher was seen coming up the path, and so the children quietly arranged themselves in their places to receive her. Jim alone stood at the door to give her the first welcome. When she perceived him, she said, with some surprise :

“ Why, Jim, are you here ? and where are the children ? Have you frightened them all away ? ”

Swaying to and fro after his fashion, he said, with a gratified expression :

“ Ho ! ho ! Miss Truat, Jim knows ! ”

“ Why, Jim,” said his friend, with a quizzical look, “ I think the morning air has had a happy influence, you are in such good spirits ; ” saying which, she passed into the schoolhouse.

When the door flew open and Miss Truat saw the children all so quietly seated, and then caught a glimpse of the beautiful preparation for her reception, “ there was no more spirit in her,” and there she stood, pale and trembling, for some moments. Finally she asked,

“Children, what does this all mean?”

“It means, dear teacher,” responded David, “that, as you have been so kind and good to us, we wanted to let you know that we loved you in return; and as we had nothing else to give you, we’ve got these things from the woods, because we knew you liked them and want you to accept them; and when you are done with them here, we want to take them to your house and put them up just as they are here.”

When David had finished his remarks, Miss Truat could not restrain her feelings, but dropped into her chair and covered her face to hide her tears. Many of the children wept in sympathy with their teacher; but Jim was almost beside himself with joy, turning here and there, see-sawing and chattering in the most exuberant manner.

When sufficiently composed, Miss Truat raised her head, and addressing her pupils, said :

“My dear young friends, you have so surprised me and made me so happy that I have no language adequate to thank you, and you must be satisfied when I say that I love you. And if I have given you in my past intercourse proof of my interest and affection, after such a beautiful expression of your regard I should be cold indeed if I did not hereafter strive to the utmost to convince you that I am



worthy of such a manifestation of your love and confidence. As for your splendid gift, I shall ever prize it as one of my richest treasures, and shall be more than delighted to have it transferred to my home and placed among my collection as one of its rarest ornaments, not only for its own real worth, but as a constant remembrancer of one of my happiest associations. But now let us turn to the special duties of the day, which have had so happy a beginning."

When the proper hour arrived for the final study of birds, Miss Truat laid her large and familiar portfolio on her table; and then, taking a survey of the beautiful surroundings with which her beloved pupils had encompassed her, said:

"After the happy consummation to which our bird studies have in so large a degree served to bring us, it is with a painful feeling that I commence the last one of the course. These interviews have been so very pleasant, and have so intertwined our hearts, that I could wish for their longer continuance; but we shall have their sweet memories to cherish and their lasting friendships to enjoy. This precious memento will always be to me a reminder of the youthful hearts which I won through the pictures and lessons that I have given during our intercourse. With these consoling thoughts, let us turn our attention to the subject of the hour.

“The *Natatores*, or *Swimming Birds*, are a large and peculiar class, including many varieties, but all agreeing in special adaptations to life on the water and for drawing their sustenance mainly from it. They are full-breasted to give them central gravity and balance when swimming ; have short strong legs and broad webbed feet to furnish propelling force ; and are covered with feathers so compacted, oiled, and surcharged with electrical attraction as to be impervious to water, however long they may remain in it. In their wing allotments there is the widest variation, extending from the merest rudiments, as in the auks and penguins, through the short, broad wings of the geese and ducks, the longer and slimmer wings of the gulls, to the matchless and tireless wings of the ocean’s king, the albatross. In the conformations of the bill there is quite as great a variety, as seen in the oddly-shaped beak of the puffins, the long sharp beaks of the scissor-bills and darters, and the huge pouched beak of the pelicans. The plumage of the swimmers varies greatly, but has nothing so attractive as to demand special mention.

“The *Swan* (Fig. 105) admittedly stands at the head of this order of birds for size, beauty of feathering, and gracefulness of movements when on the water. These birds are found in many parts of the world, the most noted of which is the *Black*

*Swan* of Australia, but only standing first because of its variety of color, since our *American* and

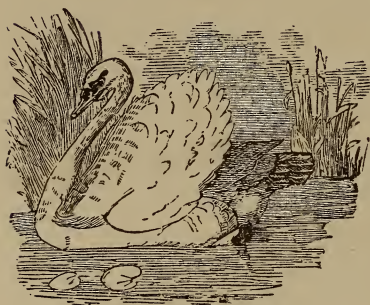


FIG. 105.—*The Swan.*

*Trumpeter Swans* are equally as attractive. The American variety is the one occasionally seen along our coasts, and more rarely on our larger inland lakes.

Its neck is long and gracefully curved; and when on the water, it is the perfection of ease and beauty in movements. The nest is a large heap of grass and weeds, built on some little islet or jut of land, if one can be found, in which are laid from eight to a dozen large olive-green eggs.

“The trumpeter swan is the variety found abundantly in the South, and differs but little from the one just described.

“The swans migrate in small squadrons, and always assume a definite shape in their flight, a straight line or an angle like the letter V placed thus >, the point of the angle being in the direction of the flight.

“Swans are easily domesticated, and form a beau-









tiful adjunct to a pond or lakelet, as they float about with so much ease and gracefulness. For this purpose, and for the soft fleecy feathers they furnish, they are much sought after, being nearly valueless for food.

“Of the old familiar goose (Fig. 106) I need say little, as you are all acquainted with her looks and ways. These birds are found of all colors, from a pure white through all shades of gray to nearly black. A dark, well-feathered gander is not without some points of personal beauty, as you may see from a drawing of an old favorite of mine, known about the yard as the commodore. (Fig. 107.)

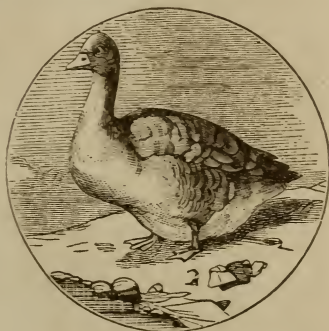


FIG. 106.—*The Common Goose.*

“The *Canada Goose*, or *Brant*, is much like this specimen, except that it is always adorned with a white patch under the middle of the neck, and is wild in its habits, not susceptible of permanent domestication. It is this variety that we generally see passing over us in the spring in large flocks, observing the same order of flight as noticed in the habits of the swans. In the case of young goslings

and ducks we see the fixedness and power of animal instincts. Very often the eggs of the swimmers are



FIG. 108.—*Natural Swimmers.*

placed for hatching under a common hen or turkey, both having a wholesome dread of water. But the change of motherhood does not alter the instincts

and nature of the offspring, for no sooner does the unsuspecting mother lead her young swimmers near the water than in they go and have a good time (Fig. 108), much to her surprise and perplexity, as is seen by her anxious clucking to draw them from their watery enjoyment.

“Of the well-known duck tribe we have more than thirty varieties in the United States, varying more or less in form, size, color, and habits, but not sufficiently to require a special mention of any except the *Wood Duck*, which stands pre-eminent for its beauty and its singular habit of perching and nesting on trees. Its head and crest are a rich metallic green; the cheeks are purplish, bordered with white, which runs in front and behind the eyes and down the breast; the back and top of the neck are bronze, green, and purple, with various other shades splashed here and there. It is a perfect duck in form, and has the full webbed feet, which it uses like the other members of the family, but it oddly takes to the trees like the perchers. Here it will sit for hours pluming itself; and when the time for nesting comes, it selects some old hollow tree or limb in which to form its nest. As the young of the natatores are able to leave the nest as soon as hatched, this would be rather a dangerous position with wings yet unplumed, but the old birds take good care to prevent

any such resultant calamity. When the brood is hatched, the old birds take the young ducklings by the wing or neck and bear them down to the shore, near which the nest is situated, and there nurse them among the reeds and grass until they are able to take wing for themselves. Most of our ducks are migratory, but the wood duck is found with us the year round, only leaving the smaller ponds to keep near the open water.

“In the colder seasons vast numbers of ducks are seen in the open waters of our bays, and form a great point of attraction for our sportsmen, who, however, must expect cold fingers and often wet jackets if they would be successful.

“The *Great Northern Diver*, or *Loon*, as more generally called, is a very interesting bird. Its form is peculiar, and admirably adapted to its aquatic habits. The body is long, heavy-breasted, with the legs placed so far back they seem attached to the tail. This renders the bird clumsy and awkward on land, where it can hardly be said to walk, but rather pushes itself along in short jerks somewhat after the manner of the seal; but let it once reach the water, and then its special capacities for navigation are at once apparent. It can outswim the fish in their own element, and captures them at will. Indeed, so great is its speed and endurance that it



has eluded a boat armed with four strong oarsmen for hours together, not permitting it for a single instant to get near enough for the anxious sportsmen to secure a shot. To add to the difficulties of capturing this bird, it is so shy and active that, when once fairly within range of the fowler, at the flash of his gun it is under the water before the deadly missile can reach it. When once the harmless shot has given the alarm, the disappointed gunner may wait for hours without seeing the object of his pursuit, for the bird has the ability of sinking its body beneath the surface, allowing the bill to project just far enough to permit breathing.

“On one occasion, when visiting the island of Mackinaw, the loons were very numerous; and wishing much to obtain one as a specimen, a half dozen of my male friends, most of them good gunners, volunteered to secure one for me. They formed a grand expedition of three canoes, manned by experienced Indian rowers, and after a full day's effort of the combined forces returned empty-handed. This will account for the fact that among the Indians it is considered a noble feat to capture a loon, whose skin is held to possess great value by reason of this circumstance, as well as from its own excellence as an article of dress and ornament.

“The plumage of the great diver has much beauty.



The head and neck are black, with more or less of purple and greenish shading, having a peculiar glossy appearance. The back is black, with white markings of an arrowy shape thickly scattered from neck to shoulders of the wings, and then assuming nearly a square form to the roots of the tail. The belly is white, with a grayish border meeting the darker colors of the back.

“The nest of the loon is a rude structure made on the borders of the water, and generally on some little islet, if one can be found. The eggs are two, or at the most three, in number, of a dark olive brown, with a few spots of a darker hue.

“Akin to the loons are the *Black-throated* and *Red-throated Divers* of Europe, and the *Grebes* of the same locality, the latter birds being often sought by sportsmen around the lakes of Switzerland.

“We must not pass without a few words respecting a singular bird found in Africa, and also in the extreme south of our own country—the *Darter*, or *Snake-bird*, as it is called from its long, flexible, snaky-looking neck. In our country it is found along the northern shores of the Gulf of Mexico, and especially in all parts of Florida. It loves the thick and reedy swamps, its favorite place being some old stump in the water or limb projecting over it. Here the darter will sit for hours preening

himself, with now and then a plunge into the water as a finny victim makes its appearance, unconscious of the dread enemy on the alert for its destruction.

“The body of the darter is not large, but its neck is stretched out into serpentine length, making the bird about three feet from the tip of the tail to the bill, which is long and extremely sharp. It is a striking fact that the darter when plunging into or passing through the water makes scarcely more disturbance than does an eel. The bird has a habit of concealing itself in the thick foliage of the swamps, where it will sit and thrust its long neck here and there through the leaves in such a manner as to lead the observer to believe that a serpent is therein concealed.

“The darter is in general of a deep green color, with a white stripe down the sides of the neck. The wings and tail are black, bordered with silvery white. The nest is of sticks, built in trees, and the eggs blue.

“Those who have been up and down our bays or made a voyage at sea have noticed what large numbers of birds would be attracted to the vessel, about which they will often continue to hover for hours, screaming and wheeling around in repeated circles. (Fig. 109.) Differing much in size and color, in



FIG. 109.—*Sea-birds on the Wing.*

one thing they are remarkably alike—the long and slender form of their wings and the slow and graceful manner in which they use them. If we examine the wings of these birds, they reveal a marvel of

adaptation and power. You all know, children, that the longer the lever is, the less power it requires to lift a given weight. Now, this is the general principle on which the wings of sea-birds are constructed. The wing-arm is comparatively short and strong, while the primary feathers of the wing are immensely long, and the secondaries, or those near the body, correspondingly short. By this nice adaptation it is seen that with the exertion of little muscular force great wing-power is obtained, enabling the bird to make long-sustained flight with little weariness. This is sometimes really marvelous, as in the case of the albatross, which seems to be always on the wing, often being met with thousands of miles out at sea, when it will follow vessels for days together to pick up the scraps that may be thrown overboard by the ship's cook.

“ With wings that spread ten or a dozen feet, so little power is required for flight that the motion of the wings is hardly perceptible, except when it wishes to check its progress. The albatross is a stupid bird, and can be easily taken with a bait thrown overboard. It sometimes alights on the deck or rigging of the ship, where it will sit half dozing, allowing the sailors even to push it around the deck before it can be aroused. Perhaps this may be caused by a little fatigue as well as by stupidity.



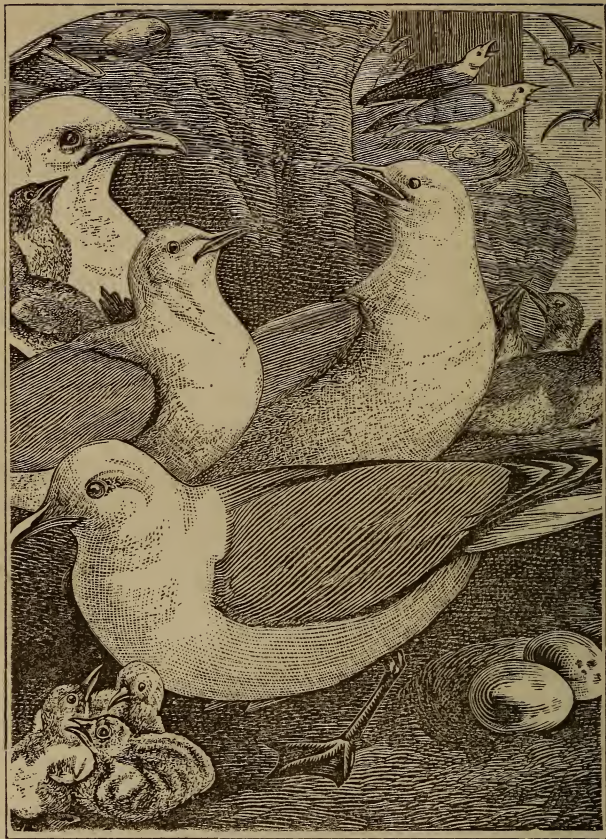


FIG. 110.—*A Group of Gulls.*

“But along our shores are numerous birds of the order of swimmers, some of which you will always see skimming over the surface of the beautiful Hudson. They are the gulls, terns, and kindred varieties.



"These birds are black, white, gray, and mixed. The gulls and terns differ but little; and as I have a picture of a fine group of the former (Fig. 110), it will give you a better idea of them than any words of mine; and here it is, showing some of the eggs and a nest of young fledglings. In nesting, the sea-birds select some sandy beach or broken shore-cliff, and there build their nests in immense colonies, so thick that sometimes the eggs will fairly cover the ground. As many of these eggs are of good size and flavor, they are much sought after by the shore people. Here are specimens of the eggs of the kittiwake gull, least tern, and Wilson's tern, which may be taken as good representatives of the class. (Plate III., Figs. 1, 6, and 10.) Along the low, sandy coast of New Jersey these eggs are gathered in large quantities with comparatively little trouble, but on bold, rocky shores the work of egg-gathering is attended with much danger, often resulting fatally.

"I have a picture of a daring feat of a Scotch egg-gatherer. (Fig. 111.) In parts of Scotland the shores are exceeding bold and rocky, to which vast flocks of sea-birds resort. The instance narrated occurred at a place where the upper rocks shelved over, and the eggs could only be reached by a rope dropped over the top of the cliff, down

which the daring hunter must descend with his basket strapped to his back until opposite the shelf which the birds occupied. But when this was done, the adventurer was suspended many feet from the place, which could only be reached by swaying himself to and fro until sufficient momentum was gained to land him on the desired spot; once there, the poor Scotchman began to fill his basket, holding on to his rope with the other hand, but during the excitement of his great success he forgot his watchfulness, and the rope slipped from his grasp and swung out many feet from the face of the rock where he was standing, leaving the poor man almost petrified with astonishment and fear. As he had gone alone, there was no one to give warning of his danger or render him assistance. To add to his trials, night was fast approaching, and to stay there under the drip of the rocks, in the chill of the sea air, would be to perish by degrees. The only chance for escape was in some way to reach the rope, but how to do that was the difficulty. There was nothing on the rock long enough to reach and draw it in, and therefore, if secured at all, it must be by the grasp of his own hands, and that could only be done by making a mighty leap over the yawning gulf to clutch the swinging rope. The chances were fearfully against him. He might miss the rope entirely, or, if reach-

FIG. 111.—*A Leap for Life.*

ing it, it was hardly probable that he could hold it fast with the momentum of his long leap added to his own weight. But to stay was to die by inches,

and to leap he could but perish by a quicker process. Desperation often gives almost superhuman strength. Looking to him who is a present help in time of trouble, he stepped back as far as possible to give momentum, and then with a mighty spring he leaped out into the air, and fortunately clutched



FIG. 112.—*The Stormy Petrel.*

and held the rope, and was soon safe on the top of the cliff, when his strength failed, and he could only lie on the ground and thank God for his wonderful deliverance.

“In the high northern regions, amid the everlasting snows and ice of the polar shores and landscapes, the innumerable flocks of water-fowls give some relief, not only to the awful desolation of the scene, but by carrying even there the evidence that God can sustain abundant life. His hand is neither shortened nor empty where eternal frost and cold freeze all currents save those which God warms by his heavenly bounty.

“Around the ice-cliffs and headlands immense flocks of geese, ducks, and other sea-fowl gather, now settling down, until the whole face of the landscape is covered with the millions, and anon taking wing, until the air is darkened with the mighty cloud of birds. To the poor scattered Esquimaux what a godsend, supplying a need more pressing than the Israelites felt when they murmured for flesh in the desert. At the season when the birds make their visitation these poor Indians gather where the roosting-place is made, and for a time luxuriate in plenty. They eat to their fill, and carry away immense stores for the coming time of need. The few whale-ships and explorers who have reached those high northern latitudes have found these bird-stores a timely addition to their failing stock of provisions. They have often captured vast numbers of them by standing on some projecting point and tak-



ing them in nets as they flew past, so plentiful and near was their flight.

“One more of the swimmers must have a moment’s consideration before we close our lessons—that bird of the wonderful wing, the *Stormy Petrel*, or *Mother Cary’s Chicken*. (Fig. 112.)

“This little bird, whose picture I show you, like the great albatross, lives almost entirely on the water, coming to land only to breed, or at long intervals for a short rest. It is met with far out at sea, where it sails easily along, with its feet hanging down, and occasionally just touching the tips of the waves, never seemingly wearied nor frightened at the wildest dash and roar of the ocean. From some superstitious notion the sailors dislike this little ocean wanderer; but, for my part, when far out at sea I always hailed its presence with joy, and its gentle but monotonous cry of *kee-re-kee-kee* had a peculiar sweetness. It reminded me that God had not forgotten me in the midst of tempest tossings and the boundless waste of waters. As he sent the sparrows to the safe dwellers on land to impress them with his divine carefulness, and upheld them to show that his hand was beneath them, so I recognized in the presence of this little bird of the ocean the same blessed assurances, only more impressively put. My faith saw the divine Protector again walking on the water,

saying, by the twitter of the little petrel, 'It is I, be not afraid':

'Is not God upon the water,  
As well as on the land?'

"He who could keep the sparrow from falling to the ground, also keeps the wing of the petrel tireless, and holds it up when the yawning waters swallow mighty navies and wreck the hopes of man. More than once, when at sea, watching the little petrels, did the question of the Saviour come to my mind with an impressiveness never felt when on shore: 'Are ye not better than the fowls?'—a question which I trust, in view of our special study of birds, has an emphasis for us all, that may be productive of great good if we give it proper heed; and that it may have this happy effect, let us review our lessons briefly, and see what great truths have been taught us beyond the beauty and attractive habits of the creatures we have been studying.

"In this review we cannot fail to be impressed with the fact that, if any department of natural history shows marvelous traces of a divine hand in shaping organs for special conditions and endowing with instincts to use them, it is that which comprises the birds. These beautiful creatures have more of brain in proportion to their size, and exhibit more of its workings in their habits. They approach

nearer the human race in their gifts of song, imitations of speech, architectural and mechanical accomplishments; and are really above us in the acuteness of some of their senses, and in the wonderful ability of navigating the air—a feat which man has only been able to imitate clumsily at some great personal risk. The birds are often used as a divine text to teach us great moral lessons; and we shall have proved ourselves but dull scholars if, after giving them so much attention, we have failed to derive the improvement intended.”

As Miss Truat concluded this sentence the door of the schoolhouse was opened, and in walked the squire, followed by a large number of the parents from the neighborhood; even Miss Yost condescended to be among the number. This inroad did not seem at all to surprise the children, who really knew of the intended visitation, as they had invited their parents and friends to come and see the treat which they had prepared for their teacher.

The intrusion was so unusual and unexpected that Miss Truat was quite abashed, and hardly knew what to say—an embarrassment from which the squire relieved her by saying:

“Don’t be flustered, Miss Truat; our little folks have told us of the surprise they had prepared for you, and we have dropped in by their invitation;

and I am very glad we have come, for I've long wanted to thank you in behalf of all our citizens for your disinterested and successful efforts to reclaim our district. Your success has been wonderful, and we feel that we have no adequate reward to offer you. Not that we suppose anything of this kind is especially needed, for the love of these interesting children must be a greater satisfaction than any consideration we could offer. They certainly have been redeemed in respect to this world; and the hopeful signs in the Sunday-school and at the stated preaching of the gospel—for which we are mostly indebted to you—give good promise that a richer redemption is not far off from many of them, and, it is hoped, many of their parents also.

“As our school has been irregular,” continued the squire, “the amount of funds allowed us by the state has not been expended, and we have quite a surplus left on hand. Being now fully assured that it can be put to good use in furnishing some important requisites to make your work more successful and pleasant, I am instructed by my associate trustees to place the money in your hands, Miss Truat, to be expended as you may deem for the best interests of the school.

“We would most willingly add some token of our approbation to you personally did we not feel assured

that it would be disagreeable to you, as we know that nothing but your noble desire to do good to these children led you to assume the responsibilities which you have so successfully borne, and your joy to-day is a reward greater than we can give.

“Take these funds, and hereafter let us have the pleasure of supplying all the means requisite to the continued success of your school.”

During this address Miss Truat stood more confused than ever, except in the tears which plentifully flowed down her cheeks. Poor Jim, who had stood in a corner observing all that passed, swaying to and fro, and who loved his kind mistress above everything else, became so sympathetic that he could no longer restrain himself, and so, with a loud cry, he sprang into the open space before the alcove which had been erected, and began to shout :

“Ho! ho! Jim knows, Jim knows, ho! ho!” becoming more and more excited and boisterous as he proceeded, manifesting something of the old wildness which he used to exhibit before his careful training had commenced. How long the excited Jim would have continued his manifestations cannot be told, for he kept on until his old father, who had come over from the swamps to witness the gala-occasion, took him by the arm and arrested his exuberance of joy, and then, turning to Miss Truat, said :



“ I’m sartin sure, Miss Teacher, that me and my ole ’oman has mighty good reasons to be grateful to you for your ’entions and kindness to our poor boy. He’s had a right slim chance at ’ome, there’s no denying, and we’s much to blame for it too; and abroad he’s had rather worse treating. He’s been thumped and kicked ’bout the whole neighborhood, and it was all the while getting worse and worse, until you had pity on the poor lad, and now he loves you better than any of us. We don’t find any fault, though we are his parents, for you’ve done more by him than we have, and all we’ve got to say further ’bout the matter is that if you want anything in our line, roots or yarbs, baskets or splint brooms, you’ll be mighty welcome to all we’ve got. And now, Jim,” said the father, turning to his son, whom he had all the while held by the hand, “let us give one good hurrah for the blessed teacher who took pity on you and me.”

“ Hurrah! hurrah! for the new teacher!” came with a will from the strong lungs of the father and son; and then, turning to Miss Truat, with an awkward bow, he said:

“ Excuse me, miss, but we must show our gratitude for such angeliferous kindness.”

Under different circumstances the whole scene would have been extremely ludicrous, but there was

such a frank earnestness in the old man's demonstration that all present could fully sympathize with the expressions of his joy.

With a hearty shake of the hand and joyous shout of "Ho! ho! Jim knows!" the son resumed his place in the corner, evidently pleased with his part of the performance.

"Most heartily, Miss Truat," said the squire, again addressing her, "do we join in the thanks and congratulations of Neighbor Lee for the great kindness you have shown in connection with your father to his afflicted son. It has been a benefit and an honor to the whole community."

All this while Miss Truat had stood in painful embarrassment, not because she did not fully appreciate the warm approvals of her efforts, but because she was overwhelmed by their excess; when, therefore, the squire had ended his remarks, she said, with a beseeching tone:

"I will accept all your congratulations, and thank you for them too, if you will be assured of my sincerity when I say that I am grateful beyond expression, and will relieve me from my present embarrassment."

This episode was a signal for a general breaking up without any formal dismissal, when all gathered around Miss Truat to give a cheering word and a

cordial shake of the hand. In this hour of congratulations even the naturally acid nature of Miss Yost perceptibly got a little sweetness, for she gave Miss Truat a hearty shake of the hand, and passed away, saying :

“Wall, wall, I du say this beats all nater; it’s more wonderful than witchcraft. I du b’lieve that little woman has made them children all clean over agin. Why, just to think! they’ve scared away lots of teachers, and now they love her better than maple sugar. Wall, wall, wonders ’ll never cease.”

Any one acquainted with the condition of the Arab district when the reader was first introduced to it, who could have listened to the conversation held among them on their way home and during all that evening, would probably have concurred in the judgment of Miss Yost, that they had all been made clean over again. Most assuredly the old leaven had been worked out, and the principles of a new and higher life were beginning to bear rich fruits in testimony to the wisdom and success of Miss Truat’s mission.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### *A RETROSPECT.*

NEARLY half a century has passed since the events occurred which have been set before the reader, and all the prominent actors save one have passed away, and now live only in memory. The sweeping march of progress has also removed all the old landmarks of the Arab district; and now, where once its sparse old Dutch houses nestled in its glens or under its cliffs, a thriving modern village shows its grassy terraces and aristocratic French-roofed dwellings. Towering far above these marks of wealth and progress, the voyager up the noble Hudson will notice a tall and tasteful church-spire shooting up from near the spot which marks the site of the old school where the scenes occurred which have held the reader's attention—

“Within whose bare and cheerless walls  
Were seats for doing penance,  
Which truly mortified the flesh  
Of all its youthful tenants.”

Broad as the contrast may be, the costly and mas-

sive temple of to-day is but the outgrowth of the seed planted by the weak hand of Miss Truat, and is one of the important and lasting results of her faithful and loving mission. From this standpoint let the reader now turn back for a few moments and take up the thread of events where it was dropped at the termination of the last chapter.

For about two years Miss Truat continued her connection with the school which she had so successfully reclaimed, and until the reformation and progress were so thorough as to make it safe to entrust it to other hands. After this she found abundant opportunities for the exercise of her enlarged Christian zeal and benevolence in the more direct work of fostering the advancement of the little church which had sprung out of the Sunday-school and services which she had been instrumental in starting. According to the prediction of the squire recited in the last chapter, the signs of promise were soon happily realized in an extensive work of grace, which included as its subjects many of the citizens of the vicinity and a very large number of the older pupils of the school, among whom were conspicuous the three noted leaders of the former confederation of young Arabs. The devoted Christian woman lived to see gathered in many precious fruits of her work of faith and labor of love, and then passed to her



reward, leaving behind a memory fragrant with every Christian virtue. Her name was a household word to the next generation; and they with willing hearts and liberal hands erected a handsome monument to pass down to coming thousands the record of her noble deeds.

During many a winter evening, while waiting for the apple to toast, the corn to parch, or the chestnut to roast, the stories of the old Arab confederation were rehearsed by the gray-headed sires who were once its young and active members. It cannot be denied that there was evidently a little spice of enjoyment yet lingering when the story was told of the grim giant who entered upon the conflict with all the armor of the pedagogue, and who was ignobly beaten with his own weapons; and of the young dandy who was tumbled with his sweetheart into the mud-puddle. But whatever manifestation of the latent Arab spirit might crop out in these chronicles of the bygone conflicts, so soon as the name of Miss Truat was uttered the voice assumed a tender tone and the narrative became fragrant with affectionate memories. Her bird stories were rehearsed, the wonders of her pictures exalted, her stuffed birds praised as being natural as life; and the wonderful training of Jim Lee and his sad end were household traditions in every habitation in the neighborhood. Nor

were the living descendants of the feathered inhabitants of the region left without an inheritance of good from the faithful ministrations of the sainted teacher. Their bodies and nests were safer from harm by reason of her teachings repeated in the ears of the children of her pupils. It might have been a relic of the superstition of the bygone days when Miss Yost and her cronies flourished, or perhaps a little happy deception of the imagination, but many of the older folks still strenuously insist that the birds always gather thickest around Miss Truat's grave, and sing sweeter when there assembled, as though they were conscious that they were chanting the requiem of their departed and dearest friend. The fact of this large assemblage of feathered choristers near the reposing ashes of the departed bird-lover may perhaps be accounted for from the circumstance that some of the whilom pupils of the deceased, out of respect for her memory and love for the pets she so much admired, had erected a number of bird-houses to win their stay, and very often also, especially in the winter season, fed them on the sacred spot. And thus the birds had learned in fact to associate her grave with a generous benefaction which might in truth be traced back to her as begetting the impulse of its bestowal. Thus it may be no stretch of imagination, no straining of meta-

phor, to say that among the birds the "memory of the just is blessed."

The fate of poor Jim Lee was a sad one, yet it gave a most striking proof that, though the head might be weak, the heart was strong in noble affections. Under the kind treatment of Doctor Truat and his daughter Jim made gratifying progress in mind and manners. His face lost most of its blank expression, and he "sat clothed and in his right mind," which, though but feebly quickened, was nevertheless sufficiently developed to discharge the ordinary duties of life. He had acquired ability enough to read simple books such as interest children of six or eight years of age, but had utterly failed to grasp the idea of the relation of numbers. That two and two make four was to him a fact which he could not master. In this matter he could go no farther than sight would lead him. In matters of usefulness the doctor felt himself amply repaid for any attention or expense bestowed on his singular patient.

Some time early in June of the second year of Jim's residence in Doctor Truat's family he was mysteriously absent—a fact made important by his uniform habit of staying around home with great pertinacity. After a day's anxiety about him, Doctor Truat began to search for the cause of his unaccountable stay, and made his first inquiries at the

home of his parents, but they knew nothing of his whereabouts, nor had they seen him since the time when he was first missed. This but increased the perplexity of his foster friends, and led to special efforts by rousing the neighbors for a general search. But after three days of care and anxiety no traces were found of the missing one, and most came to the conclusion that Jim had taken a notion to see more of the world, and had likely wandered off or stepped on board a chance boat, and was now somewhere in the great city of New York. Miss Truat, however, was convinced that some calamity had overtaken poor Jim, or he certainly would have returned home; and hence she was in great distress, and offered a large reward for finding him. Late in the night of the third day, when all the searchers had desisted from their fruitless efforts, a man engaged in spear-fishing by torchlight on the small lake in the vicinity was startled by hearing at intervals a most dismal and singular outcry. Listening more carefully, he could recognize the voice to be human, but seemingly exercised without reason, as though the mind was weak or wandering. Approaching nearer, he could finally distinguish the utterances, and found them to be a medley of incongruities, spoken with mingled outcries as though in pain or distress.

"See-saw, dickery daw," would be drawled out, and then the speaker would seemingly stop and correct himself, saying, "Ho, ho! Jim knows!" and then would immediately repeat,

"The Lamb on Calvary,  
The Lamb who died for me,  
Hallelujah to the Lamb!"

followed by, "Ho! ho! Jim knows!" as though approving the last sentiment.

These facts at once revealed the character of the unseen talker. It was the lost Jim Lee. Making his way to the point from whence the voice seemed to come, the fisherman found himself standing on the borders of a well-known quaking bog of several rods in extent, covered with reeds and tall grass, across which was a large clump of cedars where a number of herons had formed their nests. When standing there, the voice was heard coming from near the middle of the bog in the direction of the cedars; and by carefully threading his way, he approached so near that he could distinguish, as well as the dim moonlight would allow, the form of poor Jim sunken to his armpits in the bog, and nothing but his great outstretched arms preventing him from being wholly swallowed up. Near him was a large heron's nest which he had evidently got from the



clump of cedars, and he had broken through the thin covering of moss peat on his attempted return. Calling to Jim, his voice was at once recognized, for the poor sufferer responded by saying, "Ho, ho! Jim's a-cold, Jim's a-cold!"

A careful survey of the situation showed that to attempt to draw poor Jim from his terrible situation, without some firmer foundation to stand on than the thin, shaky crust of the bog, would only be to involve himself in the same calamity, and so with painful reluctance the kind-hearted fisherman had to leave the poor sufferer unaided until he could gain assistance. Giving a few words of encouragement, which, however, Jim seemed hardly to comprehend, he made all haste to obtain the needed help. It was just at the break of day when he returned, attended by three of the neighbors, with the necessary planks and ropes for Jim's rescue. This was soon accomplished. When finally drawn to the firm bank, Jim was found to be utterly chilled and exhausted, and the great strong man lay weak and helpless as a child. He was laid upon the bank, and what remained of his muddy clothes removed; then he was rubbed and stimulants administered, but the currents of life had become too stagnated for reaction. His grateful expressions showed how much he appreciated the kindness and sympathy of

the friends around him, yet he kept his eyes wandering about as though he missed something. Supposing at first that it was the nest found beside him in the bog, it was brought, at the sight of which he smiled faintly and motioned them to place it at his side, murmuring, "Jim knows." But it was soon evident that this was not the thing which seemed to be wanting. Often he repeated his favorite rhyme:

"The Lamb on Calvary,  
The Lamb who died for me,"

at times coupled with the pronoun "She, she. Jim knows;" but none of the listeners seemed to get the idea couched in these words.

As soon as Jim had been found word was sent to his parents and Dr. Truat, and the doctor and his daughter repaired immediately to the place of the disaster. The sight of poor Jim was inexpressibly painful to them both. At the time when they arrived he lay with eyes half closed, his breathing long and stertorous, his brow clammy with the cold sweat of death. When Miss Truat fully comprehended that Jim had fatally periled his life in order to do her a service, she was almost distracted with grief. In her anguish she knelt by his side, took his cold hand and caressed it tenderly, saying:

"Oh, poor Jim! poor Jim! you have lost your

life to please me, and I fear I have come too late to make you understand how much I bless you for your kindness, and the great pain I feel for your sad accident."

As she spoke these words the eyes of the dying man opened with a brightness beyond their natural expression, and with a look of clear intelligence gazed into the face of his weeping friend, then, half standing up, Jim lifted the nest and placed it in the hands of Miss Truat, saying:

"Ho! ho! Jim got it, Jim got it."

"Oh yes," was the tearful reply; "you got it, Jim, but why did you venture into that dreadful place? Would that you had never seen the nest, and that I had never taught you that I prize such things!"

While saying these words, Miss Truat had pressed the cold hand of the dying one to her lips and sobbed in anguish of spirit. Jim gave back a gentle pressure, and with a smile on his countenance began to sing in a low tone:

"The Lamb on Calvary,  
The Lamb who died for me.  
Hallelujah to the Lamb!"

Pausing a moment, he raised his hand, pointed upward, and murmured, "Jim knows," sunk back, gave one long sigh, and poor Jim Lee had passed

from the dullness of earth to the quickening of eternity.

This retrospect will not be complete without a reference to the subsequent history of three other characters with whom the reader has been holding intercourse.

David Overocker was led to choose the occupation of his father, but did not quite fulfill the parental prediction that he would "sail in the same boat;" for instead of being only master of a small North River sloop carrying cobble-stones to New York, David, after pursuing a careful course of study, both in the theory and practice of navigation, became captain of one of the finest sailing-packets that ever left the harbor of New York. His ship was ever noted for the good order, sobriety, and skill of its officers and crew, and the speed of its voyages. After following his chosen profession until he had secured a full competence, he returned to his native village, built one of its finest mansions, in which he passed the later years of life, well known for his high Christian principles and large benevolence. It is but a few years since Captain David Overocker went to his reward on high to meet the sainted teacher who won him from the ways of evil, and whose memory he always cherished with the most abiding affection.

About twenty years after the opening of Miss Truat's school, a passer through the growing village would observe, on the door of a wing of one of the handsomest residences, the name of Staughton Chivers, M. D. This fact will indicate the line of life and measure of prosperity attending the second leader of the former malcontents of the district school. Doctor Chivers was long and well known for his professional skill and the prominent part which he took in the political affairs of his native state, having repeatedly represented his district in the state legislature. Nor was his influence as an active Christian any less than that of his life-long friend Captain Overocker, who preceded him to the better land only a few months.

Young Chivers, after pursuing the necessary preparatory studies, entered the office of his kind friend Doctor Truat, and the warm friendship between him and the daughter which began in the district school grew and strengthened through life, and her praises were always pleasant themes to dwell upon.

A single glance at Dr. Chivers' office would disclose the fact that he had cherished a warm interest in the branch of natural history which had been used to win him from the ways of idleness and ignorance. Across one side of his office a handsome glass case was extended, within which was tastefully



arranged an extensive collection of home and foreign birds. Among these it was evident that a few specimens were more than usually prized by their possessor, for they were kept with extraordinary care. Not belonging to the more rare and beautiful birds, the cause of their cherished value was doubtless owing to the fact disclosed on the label, where could be read not only the name and proper classification, but this additional sentence: "Once in the collection of Miss Eveline Truat."

The last and only living prominent actor in the scenes depicted in the foregoing pages is the Rev. Jacob Van Gilder, now nearing his threescore and ten, yet still hale and hearty, and actively engaged in the duties of his sacred calling, in which he has acted a successful and leading part. In view of the facts set before the reader, it will be easy to account for the names heard in the household of the Van Gilders, where Eveline, David, and Staughton are borne by living monuments, which recall the memories of the past and the dear departed ones who gave to the life of the venerable and reverend father much of its past shapings and its holy inspirations for the future.

And thus, dear reader, you have the history of  
BOYS AND BIRDS; OR MISS TRUAT'S MISSION.

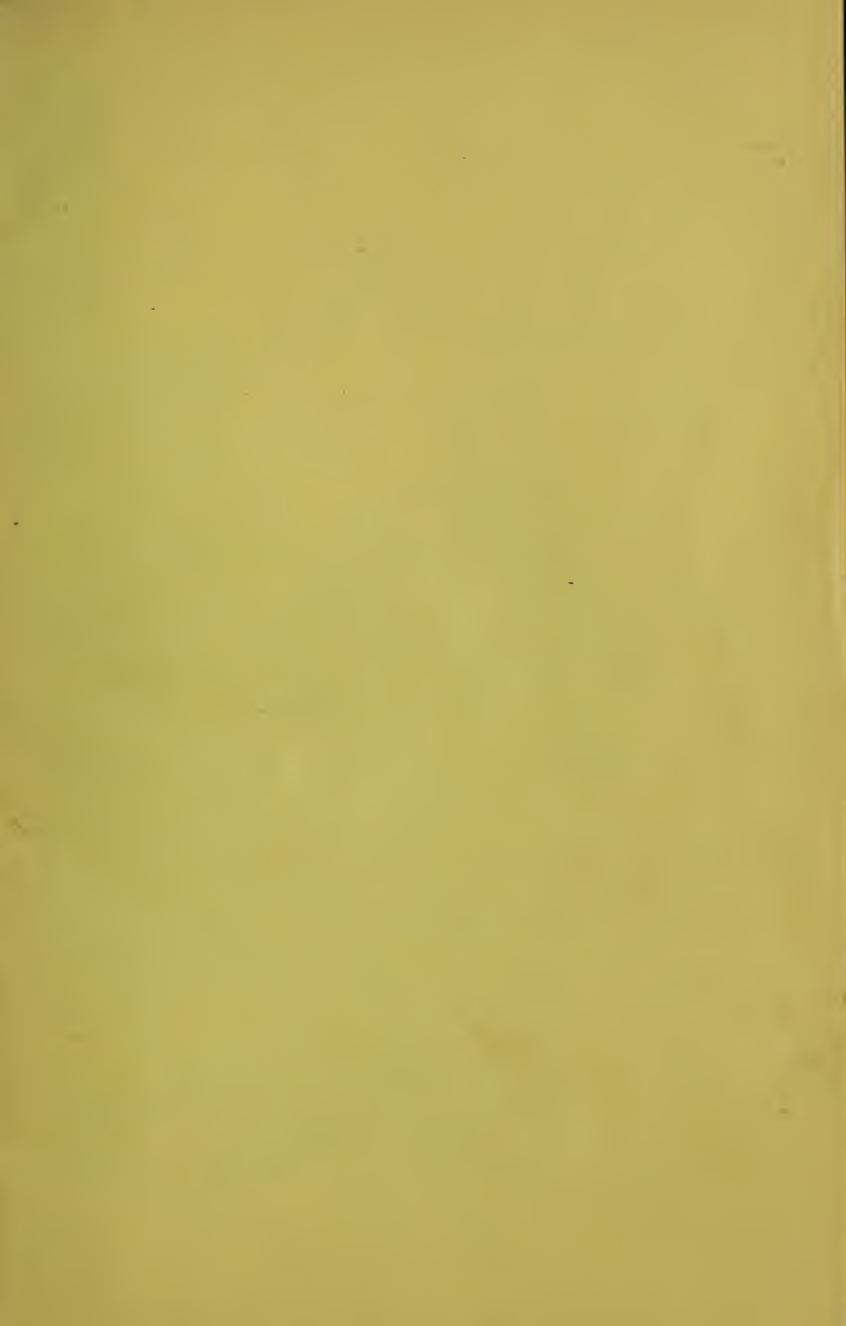
















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